

TOP STORY: DISASTROUS RELIEF FOR RWANDA

August 22 - September 4, 1994

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

FORGET WHITEWATER

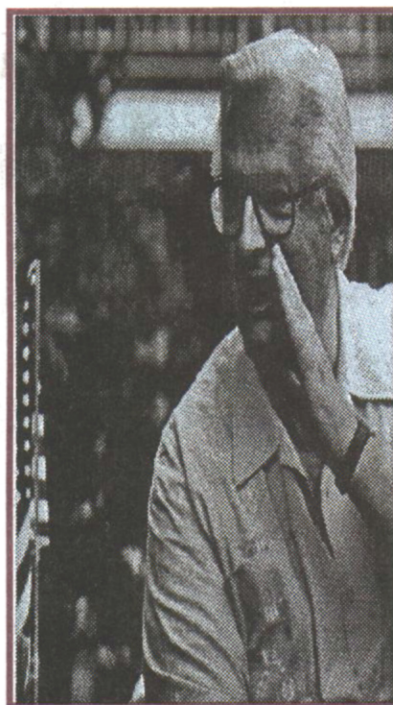


While GOP
senators give
lessons
in ethics,

BY ROBERT PARRY

a Republican
S&L scandal
escapes
scrutiny.

BY DAVID MOBERG



\$2.50 / CANADA \$3.00



Sen. Al D'Amato, ethics instructor (left)
and Rep. Henry Hyde, former S&L board member

EDITORIAL

SINGLE-PAYER FIGHT MOVES TO THE STATES

In a White House ceremony earlier this month, President Clinton wept as he declared that "Congress is going to have to decide whether it is going to listen to insurance companies or to [the] last wish" of cancer-victim Jan Cox, who had died, without insurance, the week before. Her husband, a Christian broadcaster from Athens, Texas, shared the podium with Clinton, calling for "universal health coverage [for] all Americans."

Later that same day, Clinton told the press that while his original plan had undergone change in Congress, "one rock-solid principle remains: private insurance guaranteed to everyone." But by endorsing the Mitchell Senate bill, which would aim to insure only 95 percent of Americans by 1999, Clinton once again contradicted himself. All that is left from Clinton's original plan is private insurance by America's big five insurance companies, to whom the president had long ago hocked his ear.

In answer to a question about Mitchell's bill, Clinton explained why he gave way on universal coverage. "Normally," the president said, "if you take one position [in the legislative process] and the people in the other party take another, you move toward them, they move toward

you, you work out an agreement." But in this instance as the Democratic leaders "moved toward [the Republicans], they have moved away," Clinton complained. This perplexed the president, though it should have come as no surprise. Like a pack of wolves, the Republicans have merely taken advantage of their prey's fatal flaw, his consistent lack of commitment to principle.

Fortunately, a core of almost 100 House members and a handful of senators support a single-

payer plan that includes the three principles Clinton originally endorsed: universal coverage, control of administrative costs and free choice of doctors and treatment. Recognizing the strong probability that the health care bill likely to emerge from Congress will be a mockery of these principles, these legislators are determined to salvage what they can by protecting the right of states to opt for their own single-payer plans.

The state option is crucial. It would allow single-payer advocates to organize and educate voters directly in many states. And it would partially reduce the overwhelming power of the wealthy corporate lobbyists who have purchased the votes of most members of Congress.

The importance of the state option is now being demonstrated in two states: California and Massachusetts. Massachusetts law binds legislators to support legislation adopted in local advisory referendums, and a health care coalition has placed single-payer referendums in seven state senatorial districts and one state representative district. In addition, nine of the 40 senators are already committed to single-payer and there are contests in another two districts that have single-payer candidates on the ballot. This is the second time the coalition has used this tactic. In 1992 it placed single-payer referendums in three districts and won all three by about 3-to-1 margins, thereby gaining three single-payer recruits in the state Senate. If all of this year's contests are won, single-payer advocates will have close to a majority in the Senate and strong momentum for that reform.

Californians for Health Security, organized by Neighbor to Neighbor and others, has placed a single-payer initiative on the November ballot after gathering more than 1 million signatures. (See *ITT*, April 4.) The initiative has now been endorsed by a stunning array of organizations, including the American Association of Retired People, the League of Women Voters, the California Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO) and almost 60 union locals and county federations, the American Federation of Nurses, the National Association of Social Workers, The California Podiatrists Association, the California Federation of Churches, Catholic Charities, the California Democratic Council and numerous others.

While endorsed by organizations representing a majority of Californians, the initiative is opposed by the insurance industry, which is expected to spend as much as \$100 million to defeat it. Long on citizen action but short on money, Californians for Health Security is hoping that some 2,000 house parties and other activities will raise enough for a minimal media campaign to supplement its canvassing and other activities.

If successful, this initiative would force the media to give the single-payer issue the coverage and respect it deserves. And it could turn the national debate around, forcing Congress to move in the single-payer direction. ◀

For information on Massachusetts, call Neighbor to Neighbor (617) 354-2210. For information on California, call Californians for Health Security (510) 653-6492 or Neighbor to Neighbor (415) 824-3355.

*The battle for
universal
affordable
health care now
moves to the
states, where
popular move-
ments are on
firmer ground.*

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Source of frustration

I was deeply disappointed in Leora Tanenbaum's recent review of Christina Hoff Sommers' book, *Who Stole Feminism?* (ITT, June 27). Entirely too credulous, Tanenbaum not only missed an opportunity to expose Sommers' shoddy (and undoubtedly ill-intentioned) "scholarship" but also reiterated as fact Sommers' libel against feminist writers Naomi Wolf and Joan Brumberg.

Tanenbaum speaks of Sommers' "research prowess" and reluctantly thanks her for doing "the requisite digging" to "uncover errors." Had Tanenbaum done the least bit of digging herself she could not have so glibly repeated—and, indeed, embellished—Sommers' account of the propagation of the wildly erroneous figure of 150,000 annual deaths

from anorexia.

The true story reveals a great deal about Sommers' methods and purposes. Sommers begins with a quotation from Gloria Steinem's *Revolution from Within*: "[I]n this country alone ... about 150,000 females die of anorexia each year," and goes on to say that "Steinem refers readers to Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth*, where one again finds the statistic, along with the author's outrage." Sommers then writes that Wolf got her figures from *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*, written by Joan Brumberg, a historian and former director of women's studies at Cornell University.

Here are the easy-to-check facts. First, Steinem does not attribute the 150,000 figure to Wolf. Sommers knows she doesn't, and that is the reason for the ellipses in her quotation:

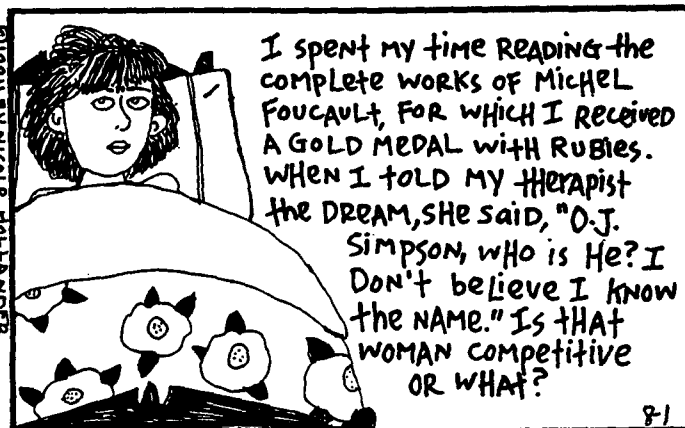
the phrase Sommers carefully omits is "according to the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association." Steinem *does* quote Wolf later in the paragraph, and thus does "refer readers" to *The Beauty Myth*, but not in support of that statistic.

Second, Wolf never cites the 150,000 figure at all. Indeed, she reports instead—two pages after the passage Sommers quotes—that "there are no reliable statistics about death rates from anorexia...." Wolf does cite Brumberg, twice: once as one of four different sources of estimates on the rate of *incidence* of anorexia, and again as one of three sources on the rate of death among *hospitalized* anorexics.

Nonetheless, Brumberg may well be Steinem's source for the 150,000 figure. If so, however, Brumberg has been ill-used by both Sommers and Steinem. In the first chapter of *Fasting Girls*, Brumberg explains how the politics and economics of American health care can lead to the emergence of disease "advocacy groups" whose claims must be received with some skepticism. In this context, Brumberg writes of the AA/BA: "The association's materials routinely state that anorexia nervosa and bulimia strike a million Americans every year and that 150,000 die annually." The reference is to the AA/BA *Newsletter* for June-September 1985, and Brumberg misreads it. The piece she cites quotes psychotherapist Steven Levenkron as esti-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



inating the number of *sufferers* at between 150,000 and 200,000.

However, the difference between Brumberg's real error—mistakenly attributing a wild figure to the AA/BAA—and the error Sommers tries to convict her of—willfully propagating a politically expedient lie—is far from trivial. Brumberg herself never endorses the figure, nor, for that matter, does she push any particular line—“feminist” or otherwise—on the etiology or extent of the disease.

It has always seemed to me that a good way to figure out what the right is up to is to see what they're accusing us of doing. Nowhere is this method more fruitful than with Sommers. She, not the feminists she slanders, has a political agenda that requires misquotation and deliberate distortion of the facts. There is very little that feminists must concede to Sommers; it's too bad that her reviewer in *In These Times* conceded so much.

Louise M. Antony
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Fumbled

In a mostly negative review of Christina Hoff Sommers' *Who Stole Feminism?*, Leora Tanenbaum praises Sommers for “debunking” the “conventional wisdom” that Super Bowl games are associated with domestic violence.

The section of the book in question is largely an attack on the media watch group FAIR, which in 1993 called attention to reports by some battered women's shelters that calls for help did indeed rise dramatically on Super Bowl Sunday. We cited first-hand press accounts of this connection and our own extensive interviews with shelter workers. We did not claim that this connection had been documented by scientific research, since to the best of our knowledge no researchers have ever studied the question.

Our efforts persuaded NBC to run

a public service announcement about domestic violence before the game. More importantly, the campaign focused media attention on the issue of domestic violence, which we always stressed was a year-round phenomenon.

This attention seemed to spark a backlash, led by a *Washington Post* reporter who angrily denounced us for not having the study that we never claimed to have. He criticized “causists” who “show up wherever the most TV lenses are focused.” His story was widely recycled by other writers, each of whom waxed piously on the importance of checking one's facts—while never bothering to call us.

Sommers is just one more of those writers who is not debunking any conventional wisdom but merely replicating it. I would have expected *In These Times* to be more skeptical of such reporting.

Jim Naureckas
Editor, *Extra!*
New York

Leora Tanenbaum replies: As I made clear in my review, I think Christina Hoff Sommers' charge that feminists willfully misrepresent women's troubles in order to advance their cause is paranoid and idiotic. But she did uncover several important factual errors. Should we ignore her research because we disagree with her conclusions?

I hate to break this to Antony, but Sommers is right about the evolution of the false anorexia statistic. Steinem writes on page 222 of *Revolution From Within* that “according to the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association, about 150,000 females die of anorexia each year...” Steinem did not get this statistic directly from the association, however; she got it from Wolf. I know this because I turned to the endnote for the citation, which refers to *The Beauty Myth*, page 182. On that page Wolf writes: “Each year, according to the association [referring to the American Anorexia and Bulimia

Association, which she mentioned in the previous paragraph], 150,000 American women die of anorexia.” Like Steinem, Wolf did not actually get this statistic from the association directly. If you check her endnote, you will find a direct reference to Brumberg's book.

Sommers did uncover an important error, and Antony herself admits that Brumberg made a mistake. In any event, I'm sure that neither Brumberg nor Wolf nor Steinem intentionally erred—and I said so in my review. But these kinds of mistakes are unfortunate, and I think we should welcome the section of Sommers' book that clears them up.

Sommers did not criticize FAIR and neither did I; in fact, I didn't even mention the organization. But for the record, Sommers criticized the finding that domestic battery rises 40 percent on Super Bowl Sunday, which was mentioned in the *Boston Globe* and *Washington Post* in January 1993. She never accused FAIR of spreading or being responsible for the false statistic. Her point was actually rather subtle: that FAIR lent credibility to the 40 percent claim because at the same time that the statistic was getting wide media coverage, FAIR was mounting a campaign to warn women about violence on Super Bowl Sunday.

I happen to think that FAIR's violence awareness campaign was great, but I also think it does no one any good to promulgate overblown statistics. Just because I pointed out when Sommers is right does not make me a Sommers fan. It also does not legitimate the rest of her book, which I made very clear I think is simplistic, slipshod and reactionary.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLAMECHEK INTERNATIONAL, INC.

A MILITARY FIRE SALE

Transforming the Warsaw Pact's main battle tank, the T-55, into a peacetime fire-fighting vehicle might seem like a good example of effective military conversion. Instead, the experiment is demonstrating how the task of hammering swords into plowshares can get beaten out of shape on the anvil of reality.

At a state-run factory in the Czech Republic, the T-55—once NATO's justification for a first-strike nuclear strategy—has had its gun turret replaced by a large water cannon. Painted up red, with siren and flashing lights atop its new, massive water tank, the "Firefighter 55" (or FF-55) is now ready to battle wildfires as well as blazes at nuclear plants and other industrial facilities.

A prototype of the vehicle sits in a light aircraft hangar in Santa Paula, Calif., ready to roll. The FF-55's distributor, Flamechek International, Inc., has targeted the United States as the first market for the machine. Flamechek marketing director Vaclav Bezucha, the creative force behind the FF-55, claims that the firefighters who recently died in Colorado would have survived in the tank's water-cooled compartment. But despite the fact that wildfires



By Woody Igou

Bye, bye ... bye, baa

Officials in the new republic of Tajikistan put on a ritual celebration for the inauguration of Tajik Air, the nation's



new international airline.

According to the *Fortean Times*, when the

first Boeing 707

(named "The Snow Leopard") flew in from London, it was met on the tarmac by dancing girls and the sacrifice of a sheep, which was bled to death.

Not surprising. U.S. airline employees have been bled for years.

Cruel slap

After Sydney, Australia, store owner Jerome Norman killed a mosquito in front of cus-



tomers, animal rights activists picketed his store, according to the *Scottish Sunday Mail*.

A good moral antidote for rugby, I suppose.

TV use finally found!

Television shows in Russia featuring faith healers and quacks have now been banned, largely because of the enormous following gar-

nered by a faith healer named Kashpirovsky. According to Reuters, Kashpirovsky claimed to cure a German actress of baldness, as well as 72 percent of the



bedwetting children in the Ukraine. He ran into trouble when trying to use his TV show

as a medical anesthetic. Two Russian women who underwent operations while watching his show later admitted they had suffered excruciating pain but were blackmailed by Kashpirovsky into feigning that they were anesthetized.

"Calling Dr. Tom Snyder!"

Ad nauseam

In Israel, a new ad campaign is aimed at curbing excessive recklessness on highways, which leads to the deaths of some 500 motorists a year.

According to *Newsday*, a Tel Aviv advertising agency has erected posters around town with the message: "Research



proves: Drivers who get rowdy on the road have small penises." Another billboard reads: "Research shows: Too fast on the road, too fast in bed." The sign has a protruding tube that periodically spurts white foam.

Hope it doesn't slow down the place process.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Vapid Cultural Zephyrs
2. E Channel Stupid
3. Unauthorized Biography Zone
4. Republican Convention Rerun
5. Bob Dole Splenic
6. Mega-Dittos from Hell
7. NRA Heart and Brains
8. Pyongyang on my mind
9. Discovered by Bosnian Serbs
10. Hurry, Melt the Polar Cap!

continue to pour smoke into the skies of the West, Flamechek has yet to find any buyers.

"I don't think we'll make any sales this year," says Bezucha. Although Bezucha, a former Czech defense ministry official, has offered the FF-55 on loan to 50 fire-fighting agencies, only two have nibbled—local Ventura County and the Pentagon. Bezucha concedes that he is bucking "a strong movement to buy American."

Czech leaders, who inherited an economy heavily dependent on foreign arms sales, often complain that the United States is moving in on their military markets and pressuring them to give up arms sales to Iran and other "rogue" states. (See *In These Times*, July 11.) A Pentagon spokesman says there's been "no overt U.S. government involvement" in attempting to make the FF-55 a success. Bezucha claims U.S. officials won't help because the tank factory, the VOP025 plant at Novy, is state-owned—a Catch-22 since conversion is the only realistic way to privatize the Czech arms industry. Converting the tanks, he says, would create thousands of jobs.

The FF-55 conversion would consume less energy than scrapping the 2,000 Czech T-55s slated for destruction under the conventional forces treaty. Even so, the machine raises environmental questions. The Wilderness Society is critical of the Forest Service's policy of aggressively fighting all fires and convincing the public "that fires are bad," rather than nature's way of fostering species diversity.

Greg Aplet, a forest ecologist at the society, says that where intervention is justifiable the FF-55 might "afford increased suppression and keep people out of harm." But he's concerned that the tank's tracks might tear up the soil, prompting erosion, or compact it, hindering revegetation.

The National Biological Survey, a new agency, is studying the effects of the U.S.-made foam that the FF-55 mixes with water. It is a synthetic hydrocarbon surfactant that is rated safe for humans—but "might affect the oxygen for fish," says Paul Schlobohm, a fire-management specialist at the National Inter-agency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

Another question mark is the FF-55's advertised use as a means of controlling nuclear accidents. "I certainly wouldn't want the existence of this vehicle to make us any less cautious about a nuclear accident," Aplet says.

And California State Fire Marshal Ron Coleman, who was formerly an emergency planner for a nuclear reactor, thinks the disquieting sight of the FF-55 outside a nuke plant could "raise the public's concern about [the safety of] the facility."

—Kate Casa and Jane Hunter

A HATE CAMPAIGN FIZZLES

An anti-homosexuality campaign in Missouri has backfired—bolstering the gay-rights movement in a state that still classifies same-sex intercourse between consenting adults as a felony. More than a year ago, five right-wing activists—with ties to various fundamentalist groups, including the Christian Coalition, Citizens for Decent Standards and the American Family Association—launched a campaign to amend the Missouri Constitution. Their goal: to outlaw human rights ordinances that protect people from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The five formed the Amendment Coalition to gather the 130,000 signatures on petitions required to put the anti-gay amendment on the November 1994 ballot. The amendment would have canceled out local ordinances in Columbia, Kansas City and St. Louis that ban discrimination against gays and lesbians.

But by the July 7 deadline, three of the five leaders had dropped out of the crusade and the Amendment Coalition was in disarray. Its president, Paul Summers, decided not to turn in any petitions because the effort had not collected the needed signatures.

Instead, the Amendment Coalition sparked the formation of a statewide opposition group called Show Me Equality and boosted efforts to organize gay-rights groups across the state.

"I fall short of saying I want to call Paul Summers and thank him for the last 10 months of organizing," said David Weeda, a leader of Show Me Equality and executive director of the Human Rights Project in Kansas City. Weeda said membership in the Human Rights Project increased by about 20 percent during the campaign against the amendment, while the gay rights movement gained greater visibility and built ties with abortion rights groups, labor unions and churches.

Similar statewide initiatives also failed to muster enough signatures in seven other states: Arizona, Florida, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio and Washington. Oregon and Idaho, however, did obtain enough signatures to place their proposed statutes on the November ballot, and while Florida will not have a statewide vote, the county of Alachua will vote on an anti-gay rights proposal.

The Michigan Campaign, a group formed in early 1993 specifically to defeat an anti-gay rights initiative, was able to disband in July when the Michigan Family Values Committee, a Christian-right group, failed to collect enough signatures.

"I like to think that [their initiative failed] because we scared them off when we organized so quickly and were able to get endorsements from several statewide organizations. They only like easy wins, and they thought they could win in Michigan," said Linda Shapanka of the Michigan Campaign.

However, Shapanka sees signs that the Christian right wasn't weakened by the defeat. "They're moving in a different direction. They're working very hard on the local level with spotlight campaigns to get their own politicians in office. They worked city by city in Oregon, which brought them up to this year, where they've won many local elections."

—Benjamin Israel

BOMBS (HIDDEN) AWAY!

The federal research facility that helped initiate the Star Wars fiasco is now pushing another project of questionable scientific merit. The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, located near San Francisco, is asking Congress and the Clinton administration to give the green light on a \$1 billion laser project called the National Ignition Facility (NIF). Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary is expected to release an assessment of the project—now in the design stage—by September 1.

Lab officials have told Congress that the NIF laser would be used to conduct research into fusion—an atomic reaction that, if harnessed, would provide safe nuclear energy. Secondly, lab officials said, the NIF would help

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Touchy fans

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* is still losing readers who are canceling their subscriptions over the paper's decision last fall not to use American Indian team nicknames in its sports coverage. What's still puzzling the editors is that when the policy began—weeks before the formal announcement struck media sparks—no one complained or, apparently, noticed.

Not just for kids

Never have promoters more aggressively used films and TV shows as promotional vehicles for products—and with good reason: profits. The sales of toys and other goods branded with *The Lion King* symbols have broken all records, looking to rack up \$1 billion in sales this year, according to *Advertising Age*. *The Lion King* is being labelled an "instant classic" by an industry that knows the real measure of success: sales synergy.

Next year, look for toys, books and a TV series featuring "Kung Fu Kangaroos" (ecologically correct martial arts marsupials) and for Teddy Sidekick, simultaneously a soccer-playing stuffed animal and an animated cartoon. And in case you thought this was just kids' stuff, note that sales of adult products licensed to *The Lion King* are booming.

Even public TV is finally getting a piece of the action. This year's public TV contract with *Barney* cuts PBS in on the huge sales of related toys,

and the upcoming Ken Burns documentary *Baseball* on PBS has its own baseball card set.

Free for all

New media technologies are testing the meaning of democratic freedom of expression in a commercial environment. The NBC-owned, all-talk cable channel America's Talking is probing the outer limits of talk programming. Along with talk shows about health (*Wellness*), psychology (*Am I Nuts?*) and government waste (*Pork*), there's *Bugged!*, an all-purpose, open-to-all rant show described as "primal scream therapy brought to you courtesy of the information superhighway."

Tobacco poster boy

The feds may have declined to attack Joe Camel (see "Etc., August 8), but things are different in California. The state Supreme Court has cleared the way for a lawsuit against the maker of the cartoon pitchman, who helps hook kids on cigarettes. The lawsuit, filed by an outraged lawyer, charges both the tobacco company RJR Nabisco and its advertising firms with unfair advertising.

And by the way...

The latest issue of *ad/vice*, the newsletter of the Center for the Study of Commercialism (1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009), points out that the signs behind players at sporting events can now be digitally altered for the home audience. Coke in the first inning, Pepsi the next...

© 1994 Pat Aufderheide

scientists maintain the safety of the nation's existing nuclear stockpile.

What lab officials didn't tell lawmakers, critics charge, is that the NIF will also be used in the design of entirely new nuclear weapons systems. Marylia Kelley, the founder of Tri-Valley Citizens Against a Radioactive Environment, says, "As [Livermore's] own documents indicate, the project is for future nuclear weapons design."

Those documents include a Livermore-published periodical, *Energy and Technology Review*. In the August 1991 issue of that publication, Livermore officials claimed that the NIF has "defense applications ... in simulations of the effects of nuclear weapons on hardware that must function in a nuclear environment, and in investigations of the basic principles of advanced weapons concepts."

Another document, the "Lawrence Livermore Institutional Plan 1994 to 1999," claims that the NIF is necessary in order to make "new scientific headway on the important problems facing the weapons design and weapons effects programs." The NIF would be used to "provide options" for improving the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile through the development of new weapons, the lab's plan says.

Despite these assertions, Breck Henderson, a spokesman for Livermore, says: "Many of our critics have said that the science in this project is a smoke-screen for the defense issues. It is not."

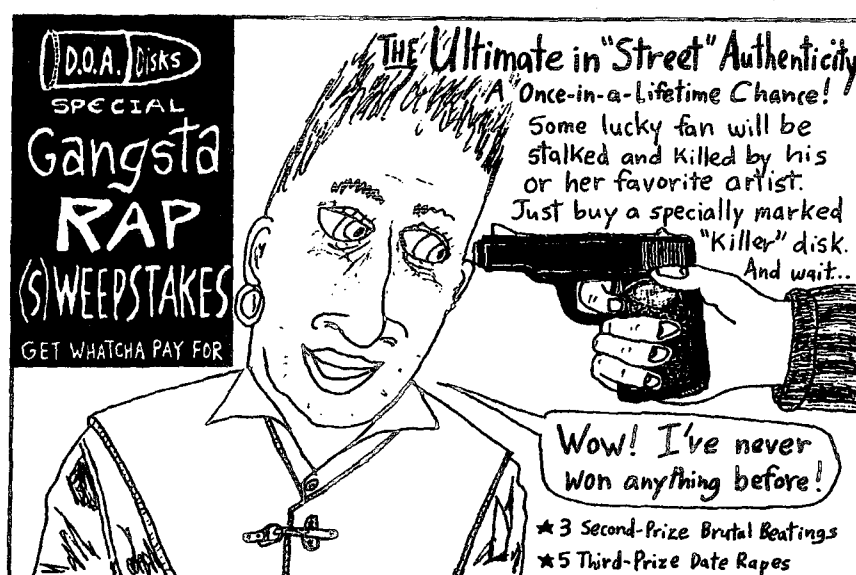
In recent weeks, two key members of the California congressional delegation, Democratic Reps. Pete Stark and Ron Dellums, have withdrawn support for the NIF project, even though advocates claim it would create thousands of new jobs in the state. Dellums suggested that the laser project might prove to be a violation of a nuclear non-proliferation test ban treaty, which the Clinton administration is negotiating in Geneva.

The government has already spent \$12 million on the NIF, with another \$60 million slated for this year.

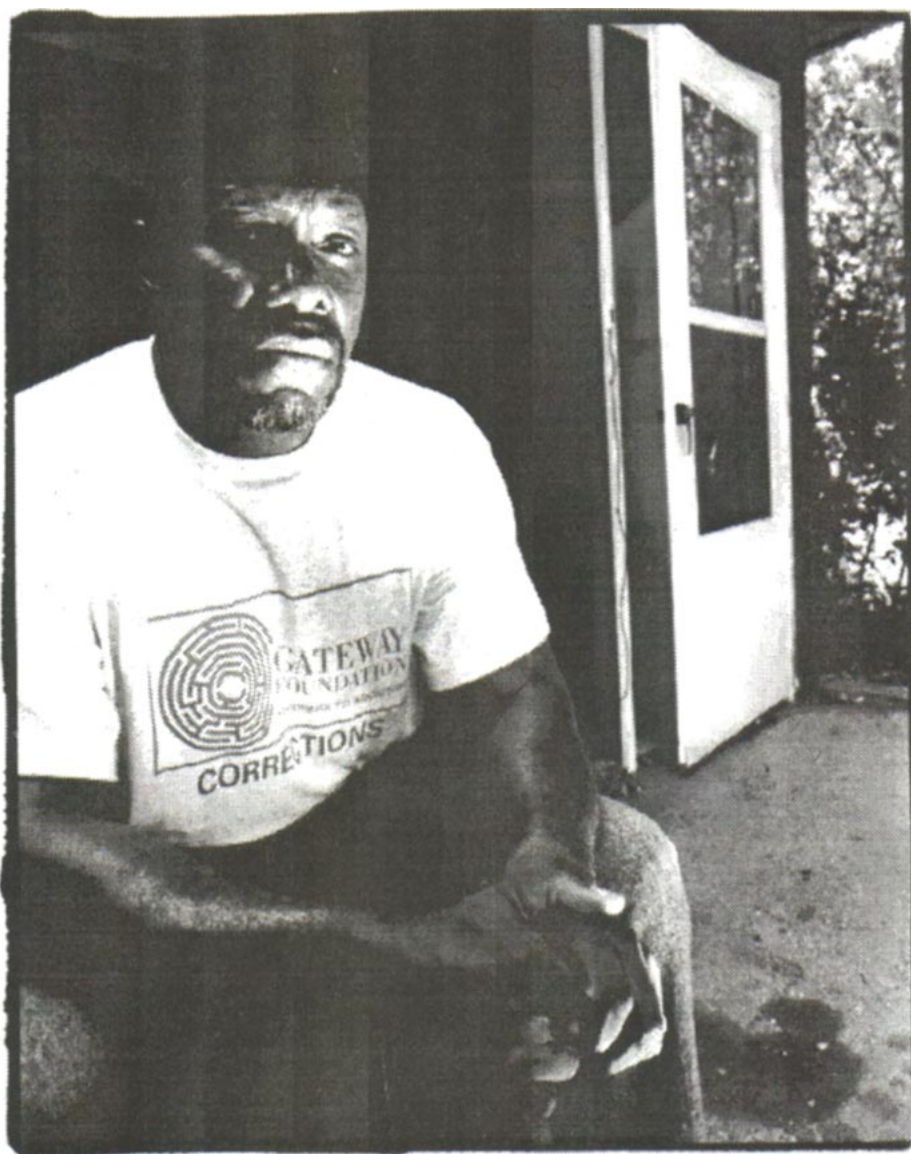
—Gene Koprowski

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid



I N P E R S O N



©DAVID SCHULZ

JUST SAY "WHOA"

*The turnaround of
Leon Dread*

Meeting Leon Dread is like meeting two men at once—the Dread of yesterday and an altogether different man, today's Dread.

The Dread of yesterday seems worth holding at a cautious distance. He was a stick-up man, a house-breaker and a car-jacker. He packed a sawed-off shotgun and a bag of heroin. He was stabbed twice, imprisoned five times, and has a rap sheet six pages long. He spent nearly 30 years caught up in an addiction to alcohol and drugs. He was, in the words of today's Dread, "a vicious animal, the worst kind of guy."

Today, Dread sits in the living room of his modest home in a south suburb of Chicago, gently bouncing his pig-tailed 2-year-old daughter on one knee. He proffers a glass of juice, smiles broadly and speaks with pride about the recent dinner sponsored by the City of Chicago's mayor's office that honored

ETC.

By Genevieve Futrelle
and David Futrelle

Sin City

A few years ago, the only "pornography" Cincinnati seemed to be able to locate was Robert Mapplethorpe's photography, in the city's very own museum. Undaunted by its 1990 failure to convict the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center on obscenity charges for exhibiting the photographs, Cincinnati has now turned its attention to the gay and lesbian Pink Pyramid bookstore. On June 30, the bookstore, its owner, manager and clerk were charged with pandering obscenity after the store rented a videotape of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1975 film *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* to an undercover member of the vice squad.

If the case goes to trial, the prosecution will have to prove that the film has no serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value, and is therefore obscene. This seems a nearly impossible feat. As the National Coalition Against Censorship has pointed out in a letter to the prosecutor, Pasolini "is a world-renowned Italian filmmaker, novelist and poet of such importance that it cannot conceivably be claimed that this work is without such value."

Salò, a loose, allegorical adaptation of the Marquis de Sade's novel *120 Days of Sodom*, is set in northern Italy during World War II. The film, a favorite target of censors worldwide, includes explicit scenes of sexual torture and mutilation, and has been described by one Italian critic as "the most powerfully upsetting movie ever made." It's not exactly family entertain-

ment; in his 1994 *Movie and Video Guide*, Leonard Maltin describes the film as a "bomb," featuring "sadism, scatology and debauchery galore."

"I think prosecutors have made a grave error they probably don't understand yet," Jeffrey Louis Reed, director of a movie house in downtown Cincinnati, told the *Cincinnati Post*. "They are trying to prosecute one of the most major literary cultural artists of the 20th century."

According to Ben Kauffman of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, First Amendment experts say the "prosecutors have little chance of winning." The three men charged, if convicted, would face up to 180 days in prison and \$1,000 in fines. The store, if convicted, could be forced to pay up to \$5,000. Perhaps the store should instead be fined for renting films that go over the head of the average undercover cop.

Turnabout

Sociologist Diana Russell, a longtime supporter of Andrea Dworkin and Catharine Mackinnon's anti-pornography crusade, has apparently been having trouble getting a book criticizing pornography into print—largely because the book contains so many graphically sexual images. Russell, who claims to oppose censorship herself, seems perplexed that efforts to censor pornography have made life difficult for her. It's "ironic," she told the *East Bay Express*, "that people who are offended by the images have made it so difficult and costly to publish a book critically analyzing them." Maybe not so much ironic as utterly predictable.

a number of doctors, teachers, police officers, journalists and Dread—today's Dread—as exemplary role models for youth.

As President Clinton gets ready to sign a crime bill that includes a "three strikes and you're out" provision that locks repeat violent offenders away for life, the story of Leon Dread deserves mention.

He has the background sociologists earmark as typical of a violent criminal: an African-American male, born into poverty in a semi-urban area by a single, 14-year-old girl. At the age of eight he was pulling his unconscious mother, an alcoholic who made a meager living through prostitution, out of bars and run-down nightclubs in their hometown of Gary, Ind. The young Dread looked up to the only men around: the neighborhood pimps, hustlers and numbers-runners. He says, "They told me not to go their way—to avoid street life—but they had money, cars, women, diamond rings, new suits. Their lifestyle was pretty attractive to a ghetto youngster who didn't have nothing to eat."

Today, when he visits Chicago schools as a volunteer in the police department's "We Care" program, Dread says he talks about role models. "I say, 'Hey, I understand the situation, but you have to start thinking. Find an adult you can trust, you can talk with.' I tell them to use their brains."

In the classes he visits, Dread tells his story, from beginning a criminal career at the age of 10 through his slide into drug addiction and a brief, violent stint in Vietnam, to another 18 years on the streets, during which time he committed hundreds of crimes. He then talks about "getting lucky" when in 1988 a judge offered him a choice: 30 years in the penitentiary or drug rehab. Dread opted for the latter and did what many both in and out of the prison system consider impossible: he got and stayed clean. Six years later, he's drug-free, married, working full time as a drug counselor at Cook County Jail and attending college at night.

He is not without remorse. "I'm just trying to do some good. After all those years of taking from the community, I need to give at least some small thing back," he says. Unlike other recovering addicts who shy away from their former haunts, Dread returns regularly to his old neighborhoods to talk to the kids. He's quick to note that times have changed on the streets, namely with the rise of a gangster culture that Dread characterizes as alarmingly cold-blooded, even to a seasoned pro like himself. "It's a wild, shoot-em-up hell out there now. In my day, we kind of wanted to live a long time. These youngsters here don't care. They don't want to be no more than 25 or 27."

Is there a remedy for this kind of urban malaise? Dread laughs. "You want to know what we should do to fix the situation? Ask the kids in the community. They'll tell you," says Dread. "Guys run up and down the streets shooting each other—it's the most exciting thing they've got going. These kids haven't had anything to show them the value of human life."

Dread advocates setting up programs to teach children how to cope with everyday pressures. "As adults, we've got to give them the skills to stop and think about the future, to set up an environment where peers will look out for one another. These days a kid will get shot for stepping on the wrong person's gym shoes. Most of the time, neither of them wants a problem. They're just not capable of thinking beyond, 'Hey, you disrespected me!'"

"It's a hard crowd to work," Dread says of his classroom audiences. "I have to reach back into the street thing and show them, 'Hey, remember, I got a Ph.D. in the streets. Where you're trying to go, I been there already.'"

—Sara Corbett

THE FIRST STONE

A CORPORATE-CHRISTIAN COALITION

By Joel Bleifuss

The old-time techniques that big business uses to influence lawmakers—campaign donations and lobbying—are being supplemented by a new and more powerful form of direct action, the systematic political mobilization of the corporation's "extended family." And one man who is helping America's largest corporations tap the political power of their extended family—employees, retirees, customers and vendors—is Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Christian Coalition.

Reed is a regularly featured speaker at conferences organized by the Foundation for Public Affairs and its sister organization, the Public Affairs Council, a network of corporate public affairs officers (PAOs) that is funded by an array of major U.S. companies and industry associations. At the council's "Annual Back-To-Back Grassroots Meetings," held last February in Sarasota, Fla., Reed delivered an address titled "State-of-the-Art Grassroots: The Christian Coalition Model."

I had the unenviable pleasure of listening in on the conference via tapes that were provided by *PR Watch*, a Madison-based quarterly that, in the words of a prominent PAO, "is dedicated to outing questionable PR and lobbying tactics." And nothing is more questionable than the un-Godly alliance of the Christian right and corporate America. Reed and the approximately 1 million members of the Christian Coalition's "extended family" are well on their way to taking over the Republican Party. As the right-wing marketing whiz Richard Viguerie put it, "A well-organized minority can often defeat an unorganized majority."

And no minority is as well organized as the Christian Coalition. Reed impressed the gathered PAOs with bottom-line figures that chart the ascension of the Christian right. Currently the Christian Coalition, founded in 1990, has more than 1 million members and 872 county chapters that are supported by an annual budget of \$20 million. According to Reed, the coalition has been growing by 10,000 members a week since Clinton's election. "By about the year 1996 or '97 the size of our annual budget and the size

of our mailing list will exceed that of the Republican Party," he said.

The Coalition plans to build that base, according to Reed, by reaching out to two demographic groups: pro-life Catholics and the 24 percent of the electorate who define themselves as born-again evangelicals.

"You're beginning to see the emergence of genuine grass-roots citizen-based movements that I think are going to be the future of American politics in the '90s and into the next century," Reed told the conference participants. He pointed out that both political parties are "in irreversible, precipitous decline." In Florida, for instance, 40 percent of the precincts lack a Republican precinct captain.

The Christian Coalition is preparing to fill that void, not with a party, but with what Reed calls "a civic league." By the year 2000 the Christian Coalition plans to establish 3,300 county chapters and 175,000 precinct organizations, one for each county and precinct in the United States.

According to Reed, the people who run America's corporations are unaware of this transformation in national politics. "If you are comfortable today, it probably means that you are going to be buried tomorrow," Reed warned.

"The corporate cultures of most of America's major Fortune 500 companies," said Reed, don't train their executives in what he calls "direct response" technologies that can mobilize citizens quickly.

For Reed, the law of the jungle prevails: "In politics there are only two kinds of shooters, quick ones and dead ones." If he is on target, the next senator in the Christian Coalition's home state of Virginia will be former felon Oliver North, and Sen. Chuck Robb (D-VA) will not know what hit him. "We will do in 1994 what we did in Virginia in 1993," Reed boasted, referring to the election of George Allen Jr., the Christian Coalition-backed candidate for governor. In Virginia alone, Reed said his organization has a membership of 38,500, and files on 175,000 voters sympathetic to various Christian Coalition causes.

The Coalition's success is based partly on technological wizardry. The group's Chesapeake, Va., headquarters are equipped with a phone system capable of generating 100,000 calls in a single weekend. Aided by a sophisticated computer system, the Coalition is in the process of obtaining the public voting records from every precinct in the United States—records that often include a history of which elections a voter has participated in and, if they voted in a primary, whether they picked up a Democratic or Republican ballot.

The Coalition provides each of its 872 chapters with the computerized voter rolls for their county. Using those lists the chapters build what Reed calls "a voter ID file." Volunteers and hired workers (who are paid \$5 per hour and must

meet a quota) call each voter in the county and ask three questions. First, the voter is asked whether or not they are in favor of raising taxes, a question that identifies economic conservatives. Next they are asked about abortion—this identifies who is pro-life or pro-choice. Third, the voter is asked what is the most important issue facing their community, and that response is coded as belonging to one of 43 identified hot-button issues, such as crime, homosexuality and humanism. As of February, the Coalition had created voter files on 1.7 million Americans.

Reed explained that the Coalition's success is based on the group's realization that its potential supporters are not a monolithic voting bloc. For example, many evangelicals will not respond to an anti-abortion argument, but can be reached with an anti-tax message. Armed with these ideological IDs on each voter, Christian Coalition-backed candidates can generate elaborate direct-mail campaign appeals. "There is no replacement for knowing what somebody cares about," said Reed.

As an example, Reed told the audience how the Christian Coalition had success in targeting Sonny Stallings, an up-and-coming Democratic state legislator from Virginia Beach. "In 1991 there was a state senator [Stallings] that we did not care for, the business community did not care for and the NRA did not care for. ... [H]e was positioning himself to run for attorney general in Virginia two years hence," said Reed. "None of us together could afford to take the chance that he might be elected because in Virginia attorney general is a nice stepping stone to governor. So we figured it would be a lot cheaper to move him back to his law practice in a state senate race than it would be to do it in a statewide race."

So Reed and company, working stealthily, nipped Stallings' political ambitions in the bud and helped a Christian Republican, Ken Stolle, capture his seat. First, the Coalition surveyed the electorate and discovered that the No. 1 issue concerning district voters was the city's inadequate water supply. Second, the Coalition helped Stolle, who "represented the more conservative pro-family and pro-business viewpoint," send out personalized letters to potential voters. The letters arrived the Saturday before the election. To those who had voiced concern about water, Stolle declared himself to be the "water candidate." To those voters who said crime was the most important issue, Stolle was packaged as the "crime candidate," and so on. Consequently, the

Coalition, by picking and then exploiting the right issues, was able to elect Stolle, a right-thinking Republican, to a seat that Democrats had held since Reconstruction.

The Coalition also gets involved in national politics. Undoubtedly, many of the PAOs who were gathered in Sarasota listening to Reed did not subscribe to the Christian Coalition's litany of evils: abortion, condoms and creeping secularism. And Reed recognized, as did other conference participants, that they could agree to disagree. Still, there were many other areas of common ground. Take the health care debate. The Christian Coalition was doing its part to defeat Clinton's health care plan. Reed told of plans to "drop into 60,000 evangelical churches 32 million postcards that have a picture of a 4-year-old child getting a shot." The caption under the picture read, "Don't let a government bureaucrat in this picture."

Another area where Reed suggested that the Christian Coalition could ally itself with the business community was around "environmental issues." Especially, he said "if a corporation is involved in getting a lot of harassment." But at that very interesting point the tape, which was distributed by the Foundation for Public Affairs, suddenly went blank. When the sound returned Reed had gone back to the nuts and bolts of tactics.

Next issue: Corporations battle for political market share.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



BANKING

Silent partners

*While
Whitewater
goes under the
microscope, an
S&L scandal
involving three
prominent
Republicans
continues to
escape
scrutiny.*

By David Moberg
CHICAGO

After Congress finishes probing Bill Clinton's Whitewater investment and the fate of Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, it should consider delving into a neglected and potentially far more serious case of politics intertwining with the savings and loan scandal. It's the Illinois connection. Here, a major part of the thrift industry collapse has escaped close scrutiny despite—or perhaps because of—the involvement of important politicians, primarily Republicans.

Freewheeling Texas, where thrift failures are likely to account for nearly \$50 billion of the estimated \$180 billion industry bailout, has understandably been a primary focus of press and public attention. Yet according to a Congressional Budget Office report, Illinois—with 90 failed institutions—is tied with California for second place

among states in the number of thrift failures from 1980 to 1992. In terms of estimated costs, Illinois is virtually tied for fifth place with Louisiana and New York after Texas, California, Florida and Arkansas.

Nevertheless, officers and directors of failed Illinois thrifts have been less likely to face prosecution than thrift officials from other states. Critics charge that this prosecution record may reflect the influence of the United States League of Savings Institutions, the powerful industry lobby whose headquarters were in Chicago until 1992. Though the League recently changed its name and moved to Washington, throughout the '80s it shared a Loop office building with the Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank, the central banker and regulator for savings and loans in Illinois and Wisconsin. For years, top league officials sat on the board of the Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank.

But the league's cozy relationship with federal regulators may not be the only factor explaining the relative lack of prosecution of Illinois S&L officials. The lax prosecution

record may also reflect the presence of three important conservative Republican congressmen on the boards of Illinois savings and loans during much of the developing crisis: current Rep. Henry Hyde and former Congressmen Edward Madigan and Edward Derwinski. Madigan and Derwinski both left their thrift positions when they assumed cabinet posts in the Bush administration—though there was a brief overlap in Derwinski's case. The Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC), the agency responsible for the S&L bailout, initially advanced \$1.4 billion to close the three banks on which the Republican lawmakers had served as board members. Currently, the estimate for the final taxpayer cost is \$221 million.

The Illinois thrift collapse appears to be a classic case study in the corruption of the financial regulatory process. It involves revolving-door relationships among regulators and the banks, and heavy industry influence on politicians through campaign contributions and other favors. But the prominent role of congressmen in three troubled thrifts makes Illinois unique.

Most of the evidence needed to determine which investment decisions doomed the failed Illinois savings and loans remains locked in RTC files. But RTC civil lawsuits against the thrifts' officials show that many spectacularly bad loans were made to projects in Texas and other Sun Belt states. Tim Anderson, the former owner of a Midwestern bank consulting firm, charges that the Chicago office of the Federal Home Loan Bank strongly encouraged thrifts in Illinois to participate in these Texas loans. This strategy, Anderson argues, was part of an effort to save the failing Sun Belt institutions and to stave off greater federal control of the

industry, a key goal of the U.S. League. Yet by making these out-of-state loans, thrift officers abandoned their institutional mission to support local home lending, and made investments about which they knew next to nothing. They often relied on the advice of loan brokers, many of whom had shady financial backgrounds.

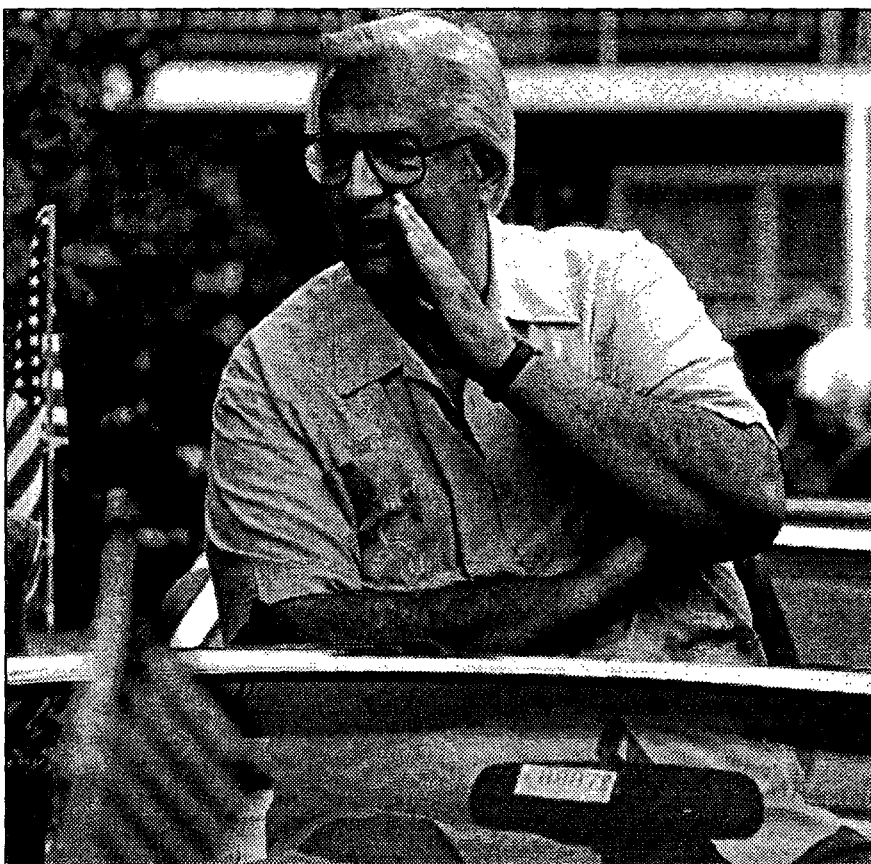
Anderson's interest in the S&L crisis was piqued by the 1989 failure of a suburban thrift where he banked. Anderson, a former Republican precinct committeeman, has zealously worked to expose the Illinois S&L story. Though many experts privately find his arguments persuasive, the political and regulatory establishment is reluctant to pursue the official inquiry he believes is warranted. Such an investigation could open many closets that politicians of both parties want to keep closed.

Anderson further argues that there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that money may have been funnelled through Illinois S&Ls into CIA operations, such as covert support for the Nicaraguan contras. This contention is also supported by at least one federal regulatory official.

A thorough inquiry into the Illinois thrift debacle may help not only to reveal more about the causes of the collapse but also help to guard against future regulatory failures. The savings and loan catastrophe combined both systemic failures and gross, often criminal, abuse. The latter ranged from sloppy business practices to outright fraud on the part of thrift managers, and from political cowardice to corruption on the part of politicians.

The costly collapse developed mainly because both the Carter and Reagan administrations responded to a temporary crisis created by the Federal Reserve's interest rate shocks by radically deregulating and laxly supervising the industry starting in the early '80s. Also, rather than move quickly to close insolvent thrifts, Congress and the Reagan administration delayed action—partly at the behest of the politically potent S&L lobby. Regulators permitted thrifts to use illusory accounting practices to hide their losses and to pursue risky investments to restore profits. The delays and risky actions greatly increased the bailout cost: if Congress had acted in 1983, according to a 1993 report of a special presidential commission, the total cost might have been only \$25 billion, less than one-seventh the current conservative estimate of likely expenses.

Within this environment, directors and officers of many thrifts greatly abused their powers, making unsound investments, participating in fraudulent schemes and enriching themselves while their institutions grew ever more insolvent.



Rep. Henry Hyde, one of three Republican congressmen who served on the boards of troubled S&Ls.

While the presidential commission estimated that fraud accounted for only 10 to 15 percent of total losses, commission member and former Rep. Elliott Levitas (D-GA) strongly dissented, citing a General Accounting Office study of 26 failed S&Ls that found fraud and insider abuse in every case. The RTC found fraud and abuse contributing to the failure of 234 out of 677 thrifts investigated as of 1991.

By 1992 the RTC—which pursues civil lawsuits against thrift officials—had filed professional liability suits against directors in 22 percent of the S&Ls under its control. RTC staff had also informed the Department of Justice that they suspected criminal activity in 70 percent of all RTC cases. The Justice Department—which prosecutes criminal cases against thrift officials—had charged individuals with criminal conduct in 24 percent of all thrifts under RTC jurisdiction.

Illinois fits this national pattern fairly closely—with one glaring exception. While the percentage of RTC civil cases and criminal referrals are close to national averages, criminal charges have been filed in only three of the 48 thrift failures under RTC jurisdiction in Illinois—or about 6 percent, one-fourth of the national average.

In explaining the Illinois record, Steven Miller, who is responsible for financial fraud prosecutions in the Chicago U.S. Attorney's office, said that "the Midwest and Chicago

did not have the spate of failures that other parts of the country had." Also, he added, criminal "referral is not an accurate gauge of whether a case is prosecutable."

Yet Illinois did have a spate of failures, and it seems improbable that RTC referrals were systematically less prosecutable in Illinois than in other states. The U.S. Attorney's office in Chicago has vigorously—and justifiably—prosecuted Democratic politicians and judges in political scandals unconnected to the S&L industry. But Anderson argues that former U.S. Attorney Fred Foreman, who served from 1990 to 1993, was—as a Republican party loyalist—loath to begin criminal prosecutions that might eventually implicate prominent Republican congressmen. Neither the RTC nor the Justice Department would say whether criminal referrals have been made in the cases involving the congressmen.

Despite the prominence of Illinois in the thrift crisis, the Bush administration ordered the closing of the RTC investigatory office in Chicago. The office was closed in 1993 and moved to much smaller quarters in Kansas City, thus losing all of the staff that had been investigating Illinois thrifts. "The Bush administration did not want the savings and loan crisis to be an election issue," said Fred Cedarholm, a former investigator for the

***"Why is it that
we've never
had an
investigation
of this thing?
... It could be
coincidence,
but it's
incredible
coincidence."***

Chicago RTC office who had previously conducted inquiries into several large bank failures. "They wanted to say it's over, we won, and we're scaling back. We were really starting to turn up some very good things, and they didn't want them pursued. ... I think we were too close to the U.S. League and too close to what was central in the thrift crisis."

In April of 1993, however, the RTC did sue Rep. Henry Hyde and the other directors and officers of Clyde Federal Savings and Loan Association, formerly located in the Chicago suburb of North Riverside.

They were charged with, among other counts, gross negligence, mismanagement, breach of fiduciary duties and breach of contract.

The RTC is attempting to recover \$17.2 million that was lost as a result of options trading, a loan to a luxury condo development in Texas and participation in a pool of out-of-state mortgages. Clyde participated in the Texas loan, the RTC charged, without thorough investigation or any expertise in out-of-state lending. In making the Texas loan, it relied on the word of J. William Oldenberg, a shady loan broker. Elaine Hopkins of the *Peoria Journal Star*, the only reporter to seriously pursue the Illinois connection, identi-

fied Oldenberg as a man with a checkered history. He had been charged with securities and financial fraud, and had links to a California S&L with reputed mob ties. One of the options traders that lost Clyde \$10 million was Refco, the firm that made Hillary Clinton \$100,000 in a year. In 1983, Clyde's directors ordered the thrift's financial advisers to use Refco as a trader, even though it had just been subjected to the largest fine ever imposed by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The RTC stated in court filings that Clyde's questionable investments—in options trading, the Texas condo loan, and mortgage-pool purchases—were indicative of "pervasive negligence" on the part of bank officers and directors. But the suit was limited because the cost of the transactions far exceeded the net worth of the defendants. The RTC closed Clyde in 1991 at a cost now estimated at \$67 million.

Hyde, who was elected to Congress in 1974 and has been most prominently associated with the amendment named after him barring public funds for abortion, was a director of Clyde from 1981 to July 1984. Before joining the board he resigned from the House Banking Committee, where he had served since his first term. It was a move openly regretted by the savings and loan industry, which felt Hyde had been an indispensable advocate for the industry while serving on the committee. But Hyde wanted to move to the Foreign Affairs Committee. There he was an ardent defender of the Nicaraguan contras as well as Oliver North's efforts to circumvent a congressional ban on aid to the contras.

When he resigned in 1981, Hyde assured the thrift industry he would "continue to press their interests on financial issues," as *Crain's Chicago Business* reported at the time. Hyde also told *Crain's* that serving on the banking committee had made it difficult to accept money from the financial industry. Although he had received some political contributions from savings and loan industry officials and political action committees while on the banking committee, the industry's largesse increased after he resigned. From 1981 to 1992, he received \$111,720 in campaign contributions and \$14,000 in speaking fees from the financial industry, most of it from the thrift business.

Hyde's motives for joining Clyde are not entirely clear. After all, Hyde has said that he didn't like the banking committee and was no longer interested in the issues before it. Yet, in a recent interview, Hyde also said, "I thought it would broaden my experience to know a little bit more from the inside" of an S&L boardroom. According to Hyde, he joined Clyde's board mainly at the request of Sylvia Miedema, the chairman and a campaign supporter. "Frankly," he said, "I was foolish in not anticipating the possible conflict of interest" in serving on the board while in Congress.

Throughout the '80s, Hyde consistently supported the thrift industry and its deregulation in Congress. In 1989, he played the leading role in a losing battle against a key provision in the Bush administration bailout. Hyde, representing the S&L viewpoint, wanted to preserve the accounting rules that permitted thrifts to count "goodwill"—essentially a

vague value associated with a bank's reputation—as part of an institution's capital. Goodwill had concealed the financial failure of many institutions, prolonged their life and raised the cost of the eventual bailout.

When Hyde resigned from Clyde's board in 1984, the thrift was insolvent according to generally accepted accounting principles. But thanks to the deregulation of the '80s, thrifts such as Clyde were given great leeway in how they reported their assets and liabilities. Although in 1984 Clyde's liabilities exceeded its assets by \$30 million, Hyde said he still believes that Clyde, counting goodwill, was solvent.

Even though he was not on the Clyde board at the time of the congressional debate on goodwill, the subsequent lawsuit against the thrift shows how much of a personal stake—and conflict of interest—Hyde had in fighting for retaining goodwill in the bailout legislation. On Feb. 1, 1990, the Office of Thrift Supervision put Clyde into receivership. If goodwill had continued to be counted as an asset as in the past, Clyde—and other insolvent thrifts—might have stayed open longer. Hyde could thus have escaped—or at least postponed—the lawsuit filed against him.

Although Hyde has portrayed himself as a relatively passive and bored outside director at Clyde, minutes of the board meetings show him actively involved in making and seconding motions (he seconded the motion to pursue risky options trading), as well as voting on loans, including several Texas loans. "I attended the board meetings and listened to what was said and felt I had a right to rely on representations made by inside directors, people whose life's work was managing and operating savings and loans," Hyde said. Yet Hyde was hardly an innocent. As a member of the banking committee, he had been involved in writing legislation on the responsibilities of financial institution directors.

Although Hyde insists that he believed Clyde was solvent while he was a director, there were many signs that Clyde was poorly run and in deep trouble. He was present when the board discussed regulatory reports critical of Clyde's investments and voted to send an attorney to Washington to deal with the criticism. Also in November 1983 auditors sent Clyde's board of directors a letter that seriously criticized the thrift's management, charging that it had not reconciled figures on its books in a timely or accurate way; that it had no formal policy on employees cashing checks, even without sufficient funds; that it was overcharging the government for interest on student loans; and that it was keeping inadequate records on many of its operations. Although records indicate the auditor's letter was distributed to all directors, Hyde said, "I never saw that."

Hyde served as a director for another half a year after the auditor's report before resigning, receiving what he said was his customary \$300 a month in director's fees. Hyde said first that he resigned because "I just couldn't make the meetings," although he appears to have attended most of them. Hyde also said that "one of the compelling reasons that I did resign was I felt I was compromising my abilities to serve as

a congressman by voting on banking issues, so I did."

Hyde continues to maintain his innocence. "They're not going to paint me as a Charles Keating [convicted owner of the failed Lincoln Savings and Loan] or somebody who made money out of their own decisions," he said, adding, "I think we were all victimized by the recession in real estate that hit an awful lot of S&Ls, and a lot of good people are suffering as I am." When he was sued last year, Hyde said he believed he would soon be dropped as a defendant in the case. Recently Judge Brian Duff said that attorneys for both the RTC and the defendants were privately discussing a settlement, though he said it may not be possible to avoid a trial.

Hyde said he has paid attorneys only \$10,500 in the 15 months since the suit was filed and that he has not yet received a bill for most of the legal work on his behalf. Hyde said he would receive a bill—and decide how to pay for it—at the lawsuit's conclusion. The House Ethics Committee, when Hyde asked, said that it was not against House rules for him to use campaign funds to pay his legal bills. But a Federal Election Commission (FEC) spokesperson said that members of Congress could use their campaign funds only to defend themselves in cases that were clearly part of their official duties or for political cases. Thus it is not clear whether Hyde can use his campaign funds to defend his actions as a thrift director. Even if the FEC decides that he can, normal campaign expenses cannot be indefinitely deferred, as Hyde apparently intends to do.

Hyde is important not simply as a director of a single failed savings and loan, but also because he may have helped provide a shield against inquiry into what was happening in the industry. Anderson, who has been a persistent, lonely critic, testified in 1993 before the presidential commission on the savings and loan collapse that the U.S. League, working through the Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank, encouraged Illinois S&Ls to grow and to buy bad Texas loans. Because most Illinois thrifts at the time were mutuals, which are owned by their depositors, rather than stockholder-owned, the boards were able to operate with less scrutiny and with looser financial standards.

The presence of Hyde, Madigan and Derwinski on the boards of three major failed thrifts discouraged investigation of the "daisy chain" of participation in Texas loans by Illinois thrifts, Anderson charges. Having prominent conservative Republican members of Congress serve as S&L directors during a conservative Republican administration may have given the industry political cover. "Illinois was the pipeline to suck the scum out of Texas," Anderson said. "But to get away with it, they needed people in place."

While Madigan was a director at Olympic Savings and Loan (where Hyde's son was a branch manager), the thrift filed a critical lawsuit that delayed the whole bailout effort for much of 1990, raising the cost. While he was a Bush cabinet member, Derwinski returned to Chicago-based United Savings for a director's meeting—for which he was paid \$1,250—two days before the vote on the major 1989

savings and loan bailout legislation.

Anderson asks if there is an inherent conflict in having a public official in a position to make decisions on private loans. "What's a congressman doing on the board in the first place?" Anderson asked. "If a congressman was on the House Armed Services Committee, then got off it, would it be proper for him to be a director of Boeing or Rockwell? It may not be illegal, but it is unethical." Even if the amount of money the individual congressmen earned at their respective thrifts was not enormous, the costs to taxpayers of their actions was huge. To the extent that they were part of a larger industry strategy that delayed resolution of the crisis, the costs go far beyond the bailout of their three institutions.

In July the RTC filed a pair of civil suits that lend some credibility to Anderson's allegations of thrift industry lobbyists channeling Illinois S&L money into bad Sun Belt ventures. The lawsuits were filed against officers and an attorney for Skokie Federal Savings and Loan, a politically well-connected Chicago S&L. Skokie Federal's chairman was John O'Connell, brother of William O'Connell, former president of the U.S. League. The son-in-law of former Democratic Rep. Frank Annunzio, a staunch industry defender and beneficiary, was an officer at Skokie Federal, which will cost taxpayers about \$168 million to bail out.

The lawsuit alleges that Skokie made wildly imprudent loans to individuals and repeatedly violated an order from the Federal Home Loan Bank Board to "cease and desist" certain practices. Those include loans to a hotel business controlled by two brothers who had lost \$11 million in the previous two years and to another hotel financier who had recently been disbarred, pleaded guilty to securities law felonies and owed \$2.5 million to previous real estate partners. Despite the strong rebuke by regulators in 1983, Skokie continued to operate on its high-flying path for another six years before it was closed down. Anderson claims the influence of the U.S. League on the Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank delayed action.

In her book *S&L Hell*, Kathleen Day reports that Treasury and congressional officials regarded Leo Blaber, president of the Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank from 1980 to 1991, as "largely controlled by League president O'Connell." Blaber dispatched a management team from the Chicago office to help set up the new Dallas Federal Home Loan Bank when it was moved from Little Rock in 1983. The Dallas office oversaw the operations of a notorious Texas thrift run by H. Robert Bartells, a former Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank president. Bartells' thrift, in turn, was owned by Southmark. Southmark was a holding company whose chief financial officer was a Chicagoan, Joseph Grosz, who was recently convicted of four financial felonies at Southmark. Anderson maintains that such personal ties formed the basis for plans to divert Illinois savings to troubled Texas projects.

Though the evidence is at best circumstantial, the Illinois "daisy chain" of thrifts could have been involved in more than bailing out Texas. Hyde was a member of the House

Intelligence Committee and recently a leading advocate of continued secrecy about intelligence agency budgets. He was also a leading defender of Ollie North and Ronald Reagan in the Iran-contra hearings. Research by reporters Pete Brewton and Steven Pizzo suggests that rogue S&Ls may have been conduits for money channeled into CIA projects, such as support for the contras. In addition, Madigan was secretary of agriculture when that agency was used as a conduit for loans to Iraq, and Derwinski was a high-level State Department official from 1983 to 1987.

Anderson argues that there should be a thorough inquiry into the role of these Republican officials in worsening the S&L crisis, and in deflecting investigation and prosecution of wrongdoing. So far, members of Congress have been reluctant to call for hearings on the matter. Besides finding it difficult to investigate a colleague, Congress, by launching the inquiry, would imply that the relevant federal institutions have failed to do their job. As both the Clinton administration and the Senate showed in their failure to investigate new Secretary of the Navy John Dalton's presidency of a failed thrift before appointing him, there is a strong disposition to sweep the savings and loan debacle under the rug.

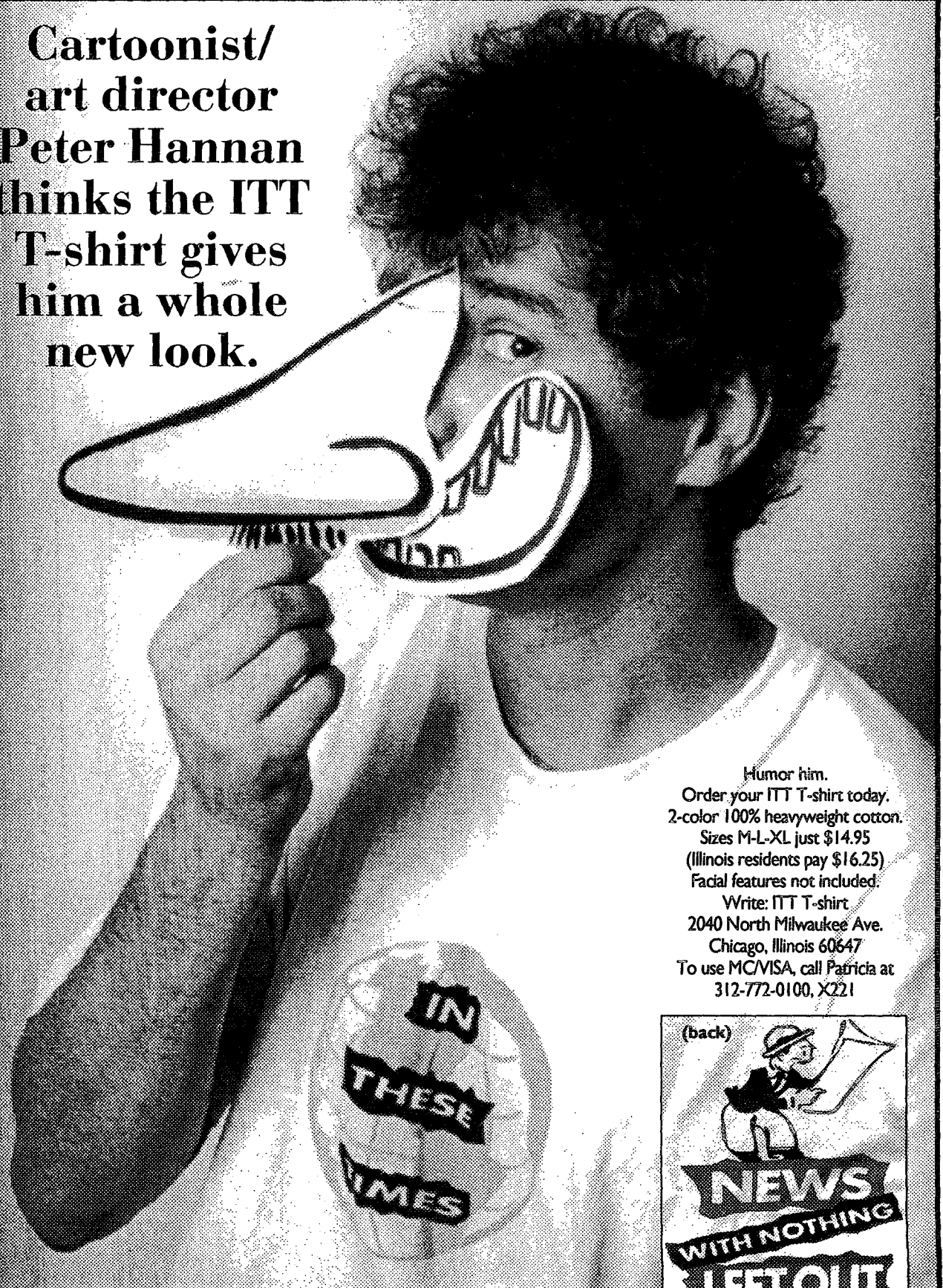
Bob Shireman, press secretary for Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL), said that Simon's office respects Anderson's persistence in asking "intriguing, appropriate questions" and would continue to help him obtain information. Yet at this point, Shireman said, Simon would regard a full-fledged congressional investigation as too much of a "fishing expedition" that could "unfairly reflect on someone's reputation."

Some experts think Anderson's arguments are basically correct, but won't say so publicly. "I think he's largely on the mark," said one two-decade veteran of government financial regulation who believes even the CIA connection is plausible. An official from yet another federal financial regulatory agency said: "Put it all together, and it has a real stench to it. Why is it that we've never had an investigation of this thing?... It could be coincidence, but it's incredible coincidence. There's just too much stuff here."

Former RTC investigator Cedarholm said that Anderson is "probably about 90 to 95 percent correct, and the other 5 percent, he's close. I think he's absolutely on the money about Illinois being central to the crisis with the U.S. League being here in Chicago, and the good old boy network throughout the country, particularly through their 'billion dollar club.'" Cedarholm said the U.S. League's club brought together top officers of thrifts with more than a billion dollars in assets at least once a year to discuss the industry's most sensitive issues, such as deregulation, accounting gimmicks and investment opportunities.

"If Congress can investigate whether Madison Guaranty got special treatment because of its ties to Clinton," Anderson asked, "why can't they have a discussion of [Hyde] ... who was more involved with an institution that cost more than Madison Guaranty? How dare they hold hearings on Madison Guaranty and not hold hearings on Clyde." ◀

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CONGRESS

Muddy water

**The
Whitewater
hearings
bombed, but a
new, highly
partisan
prosecutor
could
resuscitate the
scandal.**

By Robert Parry
WASHINGTON, D.C.

S

en. Connie Mack (R-FL) was playing cat and mouse with the Park Police officer who had notified Vincent Foster's widow of her husband's death on July 20, 1993. The officer, Cheryl Braun, had wanted to ask Mrs. Foster some questions after the initial shock wore off. But President Clinton arrived to console the widow, and officer Braun left.

On the first day of Senate Whitewater hearings, Mack asked Braun if Clinton's presence had "intimidated" her. She answered affirmatively and then added that she was "awestruck." In a poor imitation of TV's Matlock, Mack repeated the word "intimidated" for dramatic effect.

Mack had extracted from Braun the word he wanted—and the suggestion that Clinton had "intimi-

dated" investigators looking into Foster's death. It was another case of Whitewater alchemy: turning Clinton's comforting of a dead friend's widow into a sinister maneuver to obstruct the investigation.

From the start, the Whitewater inquiry has lacked both proportionality and fairness. Republicans, who ignored grave violations of law and ethics under Presidents Reagan and Bush, have feigned horror over some real, some trivial and some imagined offenses by Bill and Hillary Clinton. While the unadorned truth about the Clintons in Arkansas is unflattering, Whitewater has always been less a scandal than a political strategy to enable the Republicans to regain control of the government. The naming of conservative Reagan-Bush lawyer Kenneth W. Starr as the new special prosecutor has enhanced the Republicans' hand—especially since Starr, a GOP loyalist, may seek indictments no matter how flimsy the evidence. Until Starr's appointment, Whitewater was in danger of fizzling. The summer hearings were painfully dull and the Republicans had lost their liveliest issue with the collapse of GOP rumors about Foster's death.

For a year, leading conservatives—from Rush Limbaugh to Jerry Falwell, from Robert Novak to Reed Irvine—have fueled the Whitewater scandal with dark suspicions that the White House deputy counsel was murdered, or, alternatively, that he was transported to Fort Marcy Park after killing himself elsewhere. The Foster "mystery" was featured in popular Clinton-bashing videos and discussions of his death filled hours on syndicated radio talk shows. Meanwhile, the mainstream news media raised its own Foster conspiracy questions by reporting breathlessly that Whitewater documents had been removed from Foster's office after his death. Indeed, it is hard to imagine Whitewater cresting so far above flood level without the storm over Foster's demise.

The ghoulish speculation led recently ousted Whitewater special counsel Robert Fiske to conduct a full review of the original Park Police ruling that Foster had committed suicide. The new study by a battery of forensic experts and experienced FBI investigators was unequivocal: the earlier judgment was correct. Depressed by job criticism unrelated to Whitewater, Foster shot himself at Fort Marcy Park. The "mystery" was totally without foundation.

But the far right refused to take reality lying down. Angered by Fiske's findings of no criminality in the Washington phase of his investigation, 10 Republican congressmen and GOP agit-prop specialist Floyd Brown demanded that the three-judge panel that picks special prosecutors replace Fiske. The panel—comprised of two Republicans and a Democrat selected by conservative Chief Justice William Rehnquist—is headed by federal Judge David Sen-

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Sen. Alfonse D'Amato

telle, a Reagan appointee and a close political ally of arch-conservative Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC).

Siding with the Republican protesters, Sentelle engineered the removal of Fiske, though he too is a Republican. The panel's dubious argument was that Fiske's interim appointment by Attorney General Janet Reno compromised his independence. Then, further rewarding the GOP's ex-parte lobbying, Sentelle's panel replaced Fiske with Starr, a hard-line conservative who served in the Justice Department under both Presidents Reagan and Bush. By all objective measures, Starr's prosecutorial bias would seem far greater than Fiske's. As Bush's solicitor general, Starr lost his job because of Clinton's victory, and Starr's well-known Supreme Court ambitions depend on Clinton's defeat in 1996. His animus toward the president spilled over publicly last May when Starr openly supported Paula Jones in her strange sexual misconduct suit against Clinton. While praising the Starr appointment, the right-wing *Washington Times* reported that Starr met with Jones' lawyers to discuss filing a friend-of-the-court brief for Jones and against Clinton.

With a conservative partisan now running the investigation, many Republicans again can see Whitewater as a means to Bill Clinton's political end. Indeed, the ouster of Fiske could be Whitewater's Saturday Night Massacre, an echo of Richard Nixon's infamous firing of Archibald Cox as Watergate special counsel. The difference is that Nixon removed Cox to stop the discovery of wrongdoing; the Republicans purged Fiske to stop the possible exoneration of Clinton and his associates.

The GOP political hardball that beamed Fiske could be just the latest play in the Republicans' partisan manipula-

tion of the Whitewater scandal. Evidence suggests that the GOP first attempted to exploit the Whitewater controversy in 1992 in an effort to save Bush's re-election campaign. In a recent interview, James McDougal, the Clintons' Whitewater partner, acknowledged that in early 1992 he was upset that the Clintons had shunned him while he successfully fended off prosecution for his financial dealings. He agreed to a get-even scheme suggested by Sheffield Nelson, one of Clinton's Arkansas Republican enemies. At Nelson's urging, McDougal said he supplied key Whitewater documents to the *New York Times*, enabling the newspaper to break the first Whitewater story on March 8, 1992.

According to an official chronology, the Resolution Trust Corp. (RTC) immediately accelerated its scheduled review of McDougal's Madison Guaranty Savings Bank, moving the review up from late 1992 to March 1992. Investigators were dispatched to Little Rock to seek a connection between the failed S&L and the McDougal-Clinton Whitewater real estate partnership. When the investigators came up empty, they were sent back, eventually discovering tenuous links between Whitewater and other McDougal entities. As thin as the evidence was, it led to a criminal referral mentioning the Clintons as possible witnesses in an alleged Madison check-kiting scheme. On Sept. 2, 1992, in the heat of the presidential campaign, the referral was submitted to the Justice Department.

At the Senate hearings, William Roelle, an RTC vice president under Bush, testified that word of the Whitewater referral quickly traveled from the RTC to the Bush White House. Roelle disclosed that RTC chief executive Albert Casey told him that he had received a call from Bush's coun-

sel, C. Boyden Gray, requesting more information about the referral. When Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) tried to question Roelle more fully about this inappropriate White House inquiry, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) objected. He argued that Kerry's question was out of order because it delved back into the previous administration. Apparently, in order to keep the hearings as narrow as possible, the committee's Democratic chairman, Donald Riegle of Michigan, backed D'Amato and gavelled down Kerry's question. Casey did not return phone calls about Roelle's testimony. In a telephone interview, Gray denied that he discussed the matter with Casey.

It does appear, however, that just prior to the 1992 election the Bush administration pushed for a Whitewater indictment to embarrass Clinton. Earlier this year, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that in the campaign's final days, Charles Banks, the Republican U.S. Attorney in Little Rock, complained that he was being pressured to initiate criminal proceedings on the Madison-Whitewater referral. In an October 1992 letter to the FBI, Banks refused to seek an indictment, arguing that the Whitewater case was weak and that action right before a presidential election could constitute "prosecutorial misconduct" on his part. Though Democratic controlled, the Senate Banking Committee refused to depose any Republican principals involved in the 1992 Whitewater referral.

On another front of this one-sided political war, Republicans made much of a Treasury Department "heads-up"—or warning—to the White House about a second round of Whitewater criminal referrals that the RTC sent to the Justice Department in 1993. But Democrats remained silent when evidence of Republican wrongdoing emerged in the hearings. Dennis Foreman, deputy general counsel at Treasury, testified that alerting the White House to potential criminal problems was nothing new. Foreman, a career government lawyer, said Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush were advised when their names came up in investigations of Iran-contra, the Iraq-connected Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, the scandal-plagued Bank of Credit and Commerce International and the October Surprise controversy.

Although Foreman's disclosure was relevant to judging the propriety of a Clinton administration "heads-up" on Whitewater criminal referrals, no senator asked Foreman what crimes the two Republican presidents might have committed or how a "heads-up" could have affected the outcome of those cases. After the hearings, Foreman refused to elaborate on his testimony.

One notable Reagan-Bush "heads-up" occurred in March 1986 and did more than just alert the White House to possible press leaks. As a Miami-based federal investigation was boring into Oliver North's secret contra aid network and alleged contra drug trafficking, an alarmed Justice Department intervened. According to a memo later made public, Associate Attorney General Steven Trott instructed a senior aide: "Please get on top of this. [Deputy Attorney General D. Lowell Jensen] is giving a 'heads up' to the NSC.

He would like us to watch over it."

Jensen, now a federal judge, alerted the National Security Council to the criminal activities that directly implicated NSC staff. Within two months, the investigation was derailed. The lead prosecutor's memo calling for a grand jury was rewritten and reversed without his knowledge; another prosecutor testified that he heard discussions in the Miami U.S. Attorney's office about Washington pressure to "go slow"; Justice spokesmen denigrated the contra allegations publicly; and the gutted Miami memo was sent to Washington to discredit a similar investigation that had been started by Kerry. Iran-contra stayed hidden until one of North's planes was shot down over Nicaragua in October 1986.

Not nearly as nice as the Democrats, Republicans have battered Clinton aides for the Whitewater "heads up" in 1993. Since there is no sign that the Clinton White House used the information to disrupt the Whitewater investigation, GOP senators attacked Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman and other administration officials for discrepancies in their testimony. The Republicans understand that repeated allegations of murky wrongdoing—whatever their true merits—have eroded Clinton's shaky credibility and undermined support for his universal health care plan.

The GOP accusers seemed a strange lot for throwing stones. D'Amato knows the inside of the Senate Ethics Committee like a delinquent student knows the principal's office. Still, he took the lead in lecturing Clinton aides on the fine points of honesty and ethics. When D'Amato's time expired, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX) stepped up to hurl more rocks, despite his own glass-house relationship with a failed S&L in Texas. Two other Republicans—Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah and Rep. Bill McCollum of Florida—expressed outrage over Whitewater. But neither heard nor saw any evil while investigating the Iran-contra scandal in 1987. Both signed the GOP's minority report that spotted no crimes and "no administration-wide dishonesty or cover-up" in that case.

The GOP's hypocrisy, of course, does not absolve the Clintons from criticism for their poor judgment in joining McDougal in the Whitewater partnership in 1979. Nor is Hillary Clinton above criticism for accepting special trading advice on her \$100,000 commodities profits. Also, last winter the Clinton administration responded protectively and disingenuously—rather than forthrightly—to Republican accusations about Whitewater.

But in the Whitewater affair, Republicans have shown a dedication to destroying a sitting president—both politically and personally—that has few equals in American history. With the selection of conservative partisan Kenneth Starr as special prosecutor, that GOP campaign has entered a dangerous new phase. ◀

Robert Parry, who has covered Washington since 1977, is the author of two books on Reagan-Bush era scandals, *Fooling America* and *Trick or Treason*.

POLITICS

Black power

U

The Congressional Black Caucus, long ignored on Capitol Hill, has suddenly emerged as a major legislative force.

By Salim Muwakkil

Until fairly recently, Washington power brokers used to treat the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) as some sort of quaint curiosity—adorably ethnic but politically impotent. These days, however, the CBC is regarded as an important player in a variety of policy arenas. The group has been so influential in the formulation of the Clinton administration's Haiti policy, for example, that Sen. Larry Pressler (R-SD) last month accused the White House of conducting "foreign policy by the Black Caucus."

Of course, Pressler's characterization was designed to portray the administration as a captive of special interests—and may also have been intended as subtle race-baiting. Nonetheless, there's little disagreement on Capitol Hill that CBC pressure has had a strong effect on the administration's Haiti policy. The group has also had

a big impact on domestic policy—most notably in its recent opposition to the Clinton-supported crime bill. And the organization is also getting praise from once-critical black community leaders.

This new influence is a big boost in prestige for a group that has been seen as a marginal player for most of its 23-year history. The CBC was created in 1971 by nine lawmakers who thought it necessary to coordinate their legislative efforts to better represent African-Americans. Generally hewing to a left-liberal line, the CBC was largely ignored by the Nixon and Ford administrations. Jimmy Carter was a bit more solicitous of the group but, like his Republican predecessors, he ignored the CBC's policy recommendations. And during the dirty-dozen years of the Ronald Reagan-George Bush administrations, the caucus was thoroughly disregarded.

But with the 1992 elections, the group's fortunes changed dramatically. Not only was a Democratic president elected, but victories for African-American congressional candi-

dates swelled the CBC's membership from 26 to 40. This was a sudden change from the incremental increases of the past; CBC membership hadn't reached 20 until 1983.

The explosive growth was a product both of congressional redistricting following the 1990 census and of a 1982 amendment to the 1965 Voting Rights Act mandating that minority representation be maximized. Yet although CBC membership is at a record level, the House would need 52 black members to accurately reflect African-Americans' percentage of the U.S. population.

All but one of the group's 40 members (Illinois' Carol Moseley-Braun) are in the House and all but one (Connecticut's Gary Franks) are Democrats. This large voting bloc in the House is highly coveted by an administration that has depended on razor-thin margins of victory. And the caucus has further strengthened its clout under the aggressive leadership of chairman Kweisi Mfume. (His name is Ghanaian—from the Akan ethnic group—and is pronounced Kwah-ee-see Oom-foo-may.)

The caucus claimed credit for delivering the crucial votes needed to pass the administration's highly contested 1993 budget package. In the process, it won more than \$10 billion worth of concessions—including provisions such as hunger relief, tax breaks for working-poor families and empowerment zones for both urban and rural regions. The CBC is deeply involved in designing health care legislation and has said that universal coverage is "non-negotiable" and must be a feature of any plan it supports.

Yet the CBC has also broken with the administration on several key issues. When Clinton announced his new initiative to "end welfare as we know it," Mfume was one of its strongest detractors. He said the caucus would never sup-

port welfare reform that withdrew funding from existing programs and he heatedly criticized the White House for excluding the CBC in the formulation of the policy.

The CBC is also one of the stumbling blocks in the anti-crime legislation the administration is anxious to pass. Caucus members are upset with the crime bill's excessively punitive focus and its embrace of tough-sounding but ineffective measures, such as "three strikes and you're out" sentencing. (See story on page 26.)

The crime bill also includes the largest-ever expansion of the federal death penalty—but it omits a provision that would have given convicted killers the right to appeal their death sentences based on statistical evidence of racial bias. The omission of this measure—called the Racial Justice Act—was particularly galling to many CBC members. As *In These Times* went to press, some caucus members had joined forces with their traditional rivals to block the bill.

"How can we be in favor of a bill that adds 60 more new death penalties when it's already proven that death penalties are administered in a discriminatory manner?" asked freshman Rep. Melvin Watt (D-NC).

Some pundits contend that the administration was on the verge of making a deal with the CBC to ensure aggressive action on Haiti if the caucus relented on its opposition to the crime bill. "I can tell you from my knowledge of the situation, there has been no deal. Each issue stands on its own," said Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL), one of the CBC's strongest Clinton supporters.

The caucus' interest in Haiti was apparent from the time of the Haitian military coup that forcibly removed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in September 1991. The caucus urged President Bush to push more actively for Aristide's return. But although Bush gave lip service to Aristide's return, his administration did little to further that goal.

Clinton promised a change in Haitian policy, but soon after being elected he waffled, opting to maintain the Bush policy. The CBC stepped up its political agitation and even engaged in some extra-legislative action by demonstrating outside the White House and getting arrested for trespassing. Early this spring, all 40 members of the CBC—including Republican Franks—signed a letter demanding that the country's "Haiti policy must be scrapped."

Soon after, Clinton replaced his special envoy to Haiti,

Lawrence Pezullo, with William Gray, a former chairman of the CBC, who is now president of the United Negro College Fund. Since that time, Mfume has been deeply involved in the further formulation of Haiti policy. Although the caucus has not publicly called for an invasion of the troubled Caribbean nation, CBC insiders contend that it is doing so privately. Mfume has recommended that the United States consider "surgical air strikes to at least send a message to the military." As time passes, it appears the administration is moving inexorably toward the military intervention privately urged by the CBC.

But there are significant disagreements within the

group—and as its clout grows, those differences are sure to sharpen. For the first time in the group's history, for example, there was a contested race for the chair's position. Mfume was CBC vice chair in the 102nd Congress and by tradition should have automatically moved up to chair in the 103rd Congress. That tradition was challenged by Rep. Craig Washington (D-TX), who took Mfume on and lost in a 27-9 vote.

Washington was elected in 1989 to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Mickey Leland in a plane crash. An aggressive attorney and community activist from Houston, Washington argued there was a growing perception among blacks that the CBC was ineffective as a voice for African-Americans and that Mfume's

leadership promised little change.

Washington lost his seat in this year's congressional primaries, but Mfume seems to have incorporated the outgoing congressman's criticisms into his leadership style. Mfume is a legislator from Baltimore who was elected in 1986 on a militant platform of urban empowerment. He had seemed to mellow somewhat during his congressional years, often playing a role in crafting compromise positions between the caucus and other House Democrats. But his ascension to CBC leadership apparently has invigorated his militant impulses.

In the past, CBC members concentrated much of their activity in the legislative arena and, except for visits to their respective congressional districts, seldom set foot outside of Washington, D.C. as a body. But Mfume has convened a number of CBC-sponsored conferences in cities across the country. Since his ascension, many formerly critical black organizers have expressed a newfound respect for the caucus.



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A pivotal event in the group's transformation was last year's annual CBC legislative conference. This is an event that has been widely disparaged for its glittering excesses and strong sense of paradox: well-to-do black Americans gathering in opulent surroundings to bemoan black America's desperate plight. During the 1993 conference, however, Mfume invited a number of non-traditional black leaders—including leaders of various street gangs—and entered into a "sacred covenant" with several groups, including Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI).

Mfume said this was done to enable black Americans to mount a more effective battle against the escalating problems of violence, drugs and community dissolution. And while Farrakhan has gained fame for racist and anti-Semitic remarks, he is better known in the African-American community as someone who successfully reforms and rehabilitates the very people causing the problems. Just as the alliance with Farrakhan enhanced the image of the Rev. Jesse Jackson within the black community during his 1984 presidential campaign, Mfume's acceptance of the NOI has also lent the CBC some added street credibility.

Street credibility has its downside, however. Mfume's alliance with Farrakhan has attracted the wrath of many NOI enemies and provided an opening for right wingers who oppose the group's liberal agenda. Mfume's action, which was done without consulting CBC members, has also caused some discord within the group.

Rep. Major Owens (D-NY), for example, has criticized Mfume for embracing the NOI in the caucus' name and others have echoed that displeasure. In a letter responding to the many critics of his action, Mfume wrote that the CBC will "continue to seek a dialogue and to work where possible with those who we feel are committed ... to real and meaningful social change for our people, including the Nation of Islam."

By and large, Mfume has been singularly successful in minimizing intramural dissent. Through tireless consultation and outreach, as well as by picking his battles carefully, he has managed to bring a disciplined unity to the caucus as a voting bloc. The group's unusual concordance can also be attributed to the clear problems black America faces. Many black communities are in a state of accelerated decay and

caucus members know that the ruling Democrats are their best chance for a federal response to this crisis.

Trouble for the CBC looms on the horizon, however. Just as the group has come into its own, the federal courts are posing a mortal threat. The Supreme Court's *Shaw vs. Reno* decision last year challenged the constitutionality of a congressional district in North Carolina drawn to assure a black majority. Now litigants in other parts of the country have seized on that ruling to file a rash of lawsuits challenging racially drawn districts. (See *In These Times*, March 21, 1994.)

Mfume has said that protecting those districts are of "absolute paramount importance," to the caucus. The ruling imperils black political gains in a variety of governmental bodies, from school boards to state legislatures. In fact, taken to its logical conclusion, the high court's ruling undermines the logical foundation for the entire civil rights movement.

And so it is easy enough to understand Mfume's priorities. From 1870 to 1901, 22 African-Americans served in Congress and more than 700 served in Southern state legislatures. By 1902, there were none anywhere, and that vacancy held until Chicago's Oscar DePriest was elected in 1929. This precipitous drop heralded an era of increased racist brutality—including an epidemic of racist lynchings—and overt discrimination. Seen in this context, the CBC is both the symbol and the substance in the continuing fight against racism and the legacy of slavery. ◀

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POLITICS

Fear doesn't strike out

The new congressional crime package responds more to public paranoia than to the problem itself.

By Maggie Garb

In a life filled with raw deals, Charles Bentley had his unluckiest break on March 7 when he was arrested just hours after California Gov. Pete Wilson signed the state's new "three strikes and you're out" criminal sentencing law. Charged with stealing 50 cents from a vagrant, Bentley, a homeless man with two previous felony convictions, faces life in prison without parole.

"Three strikes" laws, which typically mandate life in prison without parole for third-time felony offenders, are among the most popular remedies for the nation's much-discussed crime problem. In the nine months since Washington state passed the nation's first three-strikes law, similar habitual-offender laws have been introduced in more than 30 state legislatures, put on the ballot as public initia-

tives in more than a dozen states and signed into law in three states.

Congress has grown equally punitive, prominently featuring a three-strikes measure in the \$30.2 billion federal crime bill. President Clinton is hailing the 900-page package—which emerged from conference committee a few weeks ago to face sagging support from both Democrats and Republicans—as a needed response to the nation's crime problem.

Yet while polls indicate that public concern over crime may be at an all-time high, the violent crime rate nationally remains fairly static. "Crime is just not at record levels," says Raymond Kelly, a former New York City police commissioner who is an adjunct professor of public policy at New York University. "But, anxiety abhors a vacuum. The Cold War is over, the economy is back on track, so let's worry about something. Crime has always sold well."

Heavy coverage of a handful of brutal crimes has fueled public hysteria over crime and promoted the myth of a crime explosion.

The highly publicized kidnapping of 12-year-old Polly Klaas in California last year prompted calls for a host of punitive legislative measures. Similarly, the murder of James Jordan, Michael Jordan's father, in North Carolina and the mass killings on a Long Island commuter train spawned demands for tougher mandatory sentences for violent offenders.

"Those events have contributed to the public's fear of crime," says Marc Mauer, assistant director of the Sentencing Project, a Washington-based nonprofit organization that seeks alternatives to incarceration. "What the media doesn't add is that you have a lot greater chance of falling in the bathtub and breaking your leg than of having your child abducted and murdered."

Media coverage of the so-called crime wave tends to focus on victims who are either white or affluent. A recent national poll conducted by *Money* magazine found that 88 percent of those polled believe crime is at an all-time high. A large chunk of poll respondents correctly identified black male teens as the most likely victims (see accompanying story), but the respondents vastly underestimated the risks for African-American female teens and overestimated threats to young adult white women. And, although the poll found that people with "high incomes are about as afraid of crime as those who are less well off," the accompanying article notes that people who make \$50,000 or more a year are two to three times less likely to be a crime victim than those who earn less than \$10,000 a year.

The omnibus crime bill seems more a response to such public misperceptions than to crime itself. It expands application of the death penalty to 64 federal crimes, even though most capital crimes fall under state law, and adds



100,000 new police officers financed by \$9 billion over six years to state and municipal governments.

But the crime bill's most hard-line measure is clearly the three-strikes provision, which requires life without parole for third-time violent offenders, as well as for third-time drug convictions and third-time felonies involving a threat to property.

The measure culminates a 15-year movement toward increasingly rigid and severe mandatory sentencing laws. First passed in the '50s in an effort to reduce racially discriminatory sentencing patterns, most mandatory sentencing laws were revoked in the early '70s after they proved too rigid. But in the early '80s, state legislatures and Congress, prompted by President Reagan's "wars" on crime and drugs, implemented a host of mandatory sentences covering everything from murder to small-time drug possession.

Yet, as many criminologists note, more than 20 years of increasingly harsh sentencing laws have more than doubled the nation's prison population without dramatically altering crime rates. The FBI's preliminary figures for 1993's Uniform Crime Report showed a 3 percent drop in "serious" crime nationally in 1993 from the previous year. "Serious" crime is measured by an index comprised of violent and property crimes reported to law enforcement agencies nationally.

Unlike FBI statistics on rape and domestic violence—which often miss unreported crimes—homicide rates are

considered fairly accurate, since both a body is recovered and the crime is reported in most murder cases. The murder rate for 1993, estimated at about 9.5 murders per 100,000 people, was up 3 percent from the previous year, but about 7 percent below the 10.2 peak reached in 1980, according to the FBI figures. Although the United States has a very high murder rate compared to other industrialized nations, the murder rate has fluctuated little in the last 20 years.

Even more telling is the National Crime Victimization Survey of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which is based on a national telephone survey and likely includes some unreported crimes. The number of violent crimes hit a new high of 6.6 million in 1992, the most recent year with complete data. But that statistic is misleading, because it doesn't account for population increases. In reality, the national violent crime rate in 1992 was 32.1 per 1,000 people per year, a drop of about 9 percent from its 1981 peak of 35.3. Rates of rape, robbery and aggravated assault have fallen about 16 percent from a 1974 high.

"There is no substantial change in crime rates in the last couple of years to warrant the three-strikes laws or other similar measures," Mauer says. "These laws have everything to do with politics and nothing to do with crime policy."

Rather than significantly altering crime rates, mandatory sentencing laws have dramatically increased the prison population. Over the past 20 years, the nation's inmate population has quadrupled, making the United States the world's

leader in incarceration rates. According to the Justice Department, there were nearly 1.4 million people in prisons and jails last year, compared to less than 200,000 in 1970 and 650,000 just 10 years ago.

The "war on drugs," which has led to severe penalties for people convicted of non-violent drug crimes, has been the largest contributor to the prison-population explosion. Between 1986, when mandatory sentences for drug offenses were implemented throughout the country, and 1991, the proportion of violent offenders in state prisons fell from 55 percent to 47 percent.

The new federal crime bill will only make things worse. In addition to the three-strikes provision, the bill allocates more than \$10 billion for construction and operation of prisons—the largest-ever federal investment in incarceration. And 40 percent of that money is tied to so-called truth in sentencing rules, which require states that receive the money to ensure that convicts serve their full sentences without parole.

Proponents of mandatory sentences, including Clinton, say the blanket nature of the punishment helps remove racist tendencies from a sentencing process. Yet Justice Department statistics suggest otherwise. Between 1980 and 1991, when mandatory-sentencing laws were on the rise, state prison admissions of African-Americans jumped from 42 to 54 percent. In 1980, blacks constituted 44 percent of the people confined in state prisons; by 1991, that figure had increased to 52 percent. African-American and Latino men currently make up about 60 percent of all prison inmates.

And studies by the American Bar Association and by the Justice Department have found that white offenders are more likely to be offered a plea bargain that exempts them from mandatory sentencing than are black or Latino felons.

Those opposing mandatory sentencing laws argue that politicians' focus on crime is designed to play on voters' race-driven fears. Mauer points out that one in four young African-American males is under criminal-justice supervision. "Whether you talk about three strikes or other draconian measures, is the goal to put all black men behind bars?" he wonders.

And three-strikes laws are not even likely to decrease crime. For one thing, the vast majority of crimes are committed by young males aged 15 to 24, according to Mauer. He cites studies showing that criminals tend to end their careers around age 30, about the time they might be arrested and convicted for a third felony. Thanks to mandatory sentencing, "our federal prisons will be filled with very expensive sick old guys," predicts Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA).

Criminologists have long contended that deterrence is achieved by certainty—not severity—of punishment. Offenders who do not expect to be caught are not more likely to consider the penalties before committing the crime. And most offenders are not likely to be caught. A 1988 American Bar Association report estimated that of the 34 million serious crimes committed against people or property each year, 31 million never result in arrest, either because the crimes go unreported or police cannot make an arrest.

Yet politicians and lawmakers seem determined to stick with quick-fix, get-tough measures. In several states this spring, legislators argued that three-strikes provisions are too lenient; they proposed "two-strikes" measures. Georgia now mandates life sentences without parole for offenders on the second conviction for violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping or rape. And one Pennsylvania lawmaker told the *New York Times* that he would like to see a "three strikes and you're dead" law. Voters in at least half a dozen states are expected to approve three-strikes laws this November.

Despite opposition from both parties, the federal omnibus crime bill is expected to be approved. "Because crime is viewed as the No. 1 issue in many people's minds—and with elections coming this fall—many [lawmakers] want to be able to go home and say we passed a crime bill," Mauer says. "It doesn't necessarily matter what's in it."

◀ Maggie Garb is a freelance writer based in New York.

Backdoor aid to the inner cities

One place where crime fears are backed up by statistics is the inner city. In communities decimated by the flight of jobs and capital and by the influx of organized drug-related gangs, homicide has become the No. 1 cause of death for teenage males. The crime victimization rate for African-American males between the ages of 16 and 19 is nearly seven times the national rate, and almost twice the rate for white male teenagers, FBI figures show.

And while many provisions of the omnibus crime bill—such as the three-strikes measure—only promise to make things worse, the legislation also includes some aid for the inner city. About \$9 billion of the \$30.2 billion program is earmarked for social programs, including crime-prevention measures such as drug treatment and midnight basketball (which gets young men off the street during the hours when they are most likely to commit—or be victims of—crimes).

Some advocates of such programs say the bill lacks a cohesive strategy, offering instead an unfocused something-for-everyone approach. But just a little more than a year after Congress rejected President Clinton's efforts to increase federal support for cities, the crime bill opens a backdoor to federal financing of urban programs. "Nine billion dollars, that's an awful lot of money to go into our ghettos and minority neighborhoods," says Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA), a liberal lawmaker.

As *In These Times* went to press, Edwards was uncertain which way he would vote, but he seemed to be leaning toward supporting the package: "They're so hostile to social programs here [on Capitol Hill], it's really the best we could do."

—M.G.

UNITED NATIONS

Relief disaster

Late last month, parachutes carrying eight pallets of food drifted the wrong way out of the clouds over Katale, Zaire, into a hamlet of mud-and-thatch huts. One crashed into a stone wall, another just missed a schoolhouse, the rest plowed into coffee trees and a cornfield. "I thought it was a bomb by the Rwandan Patriotic Front," one farmer told reporters moments after crates the size of cars landed yards from his huts. His neighbors raced the United Nations relief workers for the bounty: chocolate, Gruyère cheese, corned beef, blankets, second-hand clothes.

The nearby refugee camp in Katale already had food in storage. But the desperate Rwandans in Goma, more than 30 miles away, needed oral rehydration tablets, not treats. "It's criminal," said one relief worker, as the

three American C-130 planes that had missed the parachute drop by a mile droned back to Entebbe. A U.N. official more tactfully told the *New York Times* that "American resources could be used much better."

This vignette, which made the news on July 25, came to symbolize the disaster of disaster relief for the Rwandan refugees in Zaire. By the end of July, two weeks after the exodus had begun, the world community still had little to offer the refugees. "Only a few thousand pounds of grain, rehydration salts and intravenous fluids have been airlifted from the United States," *Newsday* reported on July 29. Only 69 American troops had landed. And a water purification system had arrived (three days late) to pump 100,000 gallons a day from Zaire's Lake Kivu—but only a handful of water tankers were on hand to truck it to the refugee camps 20 miles away.

After the Rwandan slaughter began in early April, U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali pleaded with the world to take some modest action. A U.N. observer force

of 2,500 had quickly retreated, so he wanted to raise a peacekeeping force of 5,500 soldiers to land in the Rwandan capital of Kigali and fan out into the countryside to create safe pockets away from the fighting. But as the massacre tolls mounted, recalls Fred Eckhart, a spokesman for the U.N., the secretary-general would sit in meetings and ask "if anyone was ready to make the first offer. There was deadly silence, or a few would say it was under consideration." And the United States, relief-shy after Somalia, did nothing. President Clinton, who ignored the entreaties of the Congressional Black Caucus, told graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy that it's "not our job to take care of the world's misery."

On May 17, the Security Council finally voted to send the troops—then the bickering began over who would go, who would provide the transportation and supplies, and who would pay for it. A handful of African nations volunteered troops in early June, but they also submitted shopping lists to the U.N., which the United States and others were slow to fill. The United States promised 50 armored personnel carriers to the Ghanaian forces, but the Department of Defense haggled with the U.N. over advance payment—delaying the arrival of the vehicles until mid-July. On June 9, Oxfam, a private international relief group based in England, issued a bristling statement: "During the past months of slaughter the United States has been the key player in halting action on Rwanda, creating a series of excuses and inventing problems that do not exist."

Rep. Donald Payne (D-NJ) watched the whole sorry saga unfold as a member of both the Congressional Black Caucus and the House Subcommittee on Africa. The mass exo-

*The
roots of the
Rwandan
tragedy reach
far beyond
Africa.*

By Will Nixon

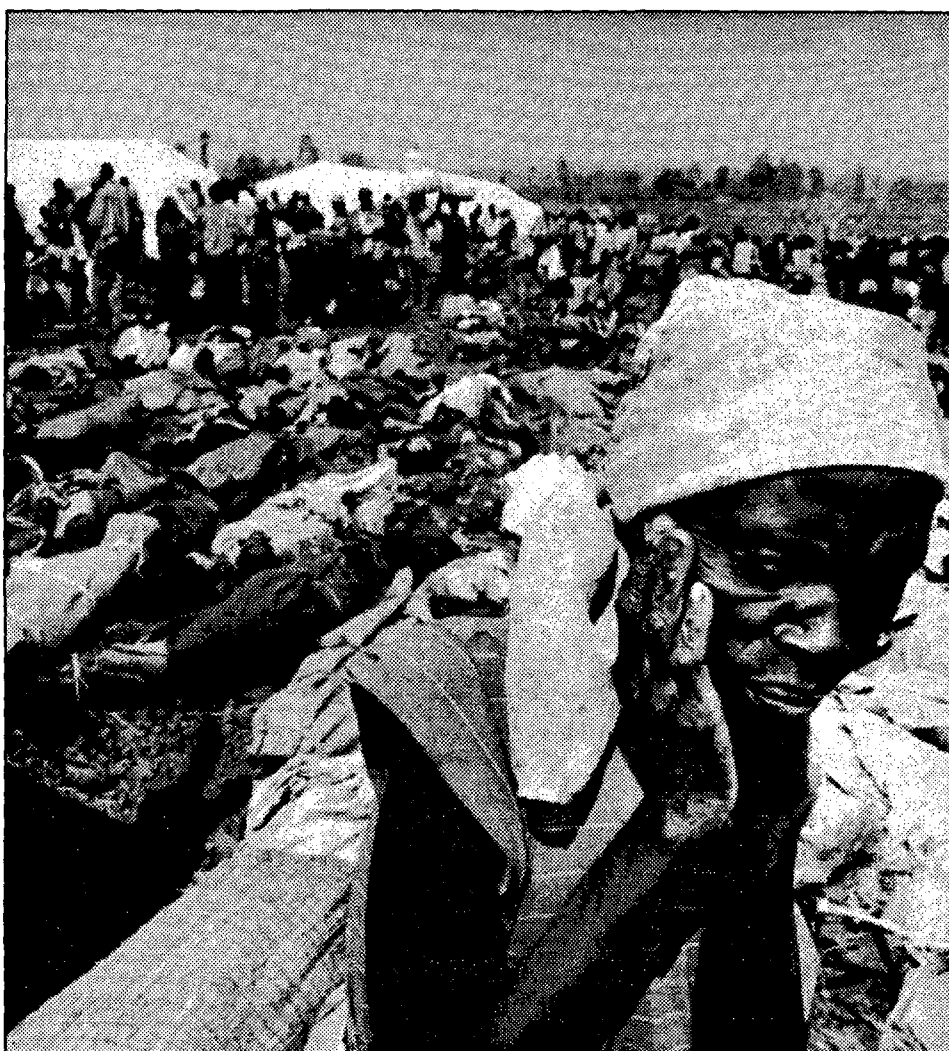
dus into Zaire would never have happened, Payne says, if the African countries "could have gotten logistical support from us. We watched this catastrophe for 100 days only to see the administration show a lack of interest until late July when the president responded in an appropriate matter."

But Joel Charny, the policy director for Oxfam America, says that the U.N. shouldn't even be begging for money at times like this. "The deaths in Zaire are unnecessary," Charny insists. "Oxfam/UK keeps a permanent warehouse of supplies, and if it has the money it can get anywhere in the world within 24 to 36 hours. But where is this capability in a global relief agency?" Instead of establishing a permanent, well-equipped relief force, the world relies on Oxfam and its cousins to respond to crises. "It's the equivalent of a volunteer fire department from some dinky town in New York responding daily to fires in New York City," Charny says. "I've been watching these things for 14 years. What gets me so angry is that they always seem to be the same."

The time has come, Charny believes, to create a truly global relief agency out of the U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which now simply sends scouts out to report on potential disasters for other, more powerful, U.N. agencies. Rather than having to play politics, which usually produces nothing until images of horror on the TV screen force countries to act, this agency could plan ahead by stockpiling tents, food, oral rehydration tablets and other disaster relief supplies in East Africa, where crises now erupt every few years.

But prior planning often seems to be missing from disaster relief. "The governments of the world like to specialize in bold actions, not in prevention," says Brent Blackwelder, vice president of Friends of the Earth. For much of 1993, he and others urged Secretary of State Warren Christopher, President Clinton and Congress not to withdraw American troops from Somalia until they set up land-restoration projects like the conservation programs established in the United States in response to the disaster of the Dust Bowl.

In the past 20 years, the Horn of Africa has suffered three major famines. Blackwelder says two of them could have been prevented had we heeded the advice of U.N. experts who found that the 1973-74 famine wasn't due to drought



so much as to desertification and the conversion of agriculture from local produce to cash crops for export. "People have weathered natural droughts for centuries," he says. "But we've broken the cycle of the food wisdom of the ages." By the Ethiopian famine of 1983-84, Blackwelder notes, "we had the paradox of carnations and strawberries for export to Europe growing within miles of people dying of starvation." But Christopher, Clinton and Congress ignored these long-range strategies. "The administration was totally committed to the idea of popping in and popping out," he says. Alas, the relief business may get yet another chance: after several bad harvests the Horn of Africa faces the threat of another famine next year. "If there are no rains in August, there will be a disaster," says Oxfam's Charny. "There will be 6.7 million people at risk in Ethiopia and 1.3 million in Eritrea."

One radical answer to the dilemma of disaster relief—promoted in a polemical book by British journalist Graham Hancock entitled *Lords of Poverty*—is simply to abolish

The bodies of Rwandan refugees who fell victim to cholera await burial in Goma, Zaire.

foreign aid. He saw his full share of follies in Somalia in 1987 as a drought overtook the central rangelands. For two years, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) had dumped surplus American grain on the country at the peak of good harvests, depressing the prices by 40 percent and undercutting the local farmers, who had only a small amount of grain stored in reserve when the drought hit. By February 1987, Somalis and Oxfam were warning USAID and local U.N. agencies about the famine in the central rangelands, but to no avail.

The two sides bickered well into April, when Hancock drove through the region to find "appalling scenes of malnutrition, notably among children and the elderly. The carcasses of dead livestock were scattered everywhere across the rangelands and a famine migration of destitute nomads had begun, with families camped on the outskirts of every settlement—frequently roofing their temporary shelters with the skins of their last camels."

He returned in June and found that "the already bad nutritional status of the people had deteriorated badly. ... The only food available for them to eat was Indian wheat being distributed by the Somali government." The aid bureaucrats, such as the local U.N. officials who lived a "lavish duty-free" life on \$55,000 a year, had essentially done nothing. And well-meaning U.S. citizens had managed to send the starving Somalis "frostbite medicine shipped from Minnesota, electric blankets, and huge consignments of Go-Slim soup and chocolate-flavored drinks for dieters."

Hancock argues that disaster relief often functions this way. One study of European Economic Community (EEC) relief efforts found that it took the EEC an average of 400 days to answer emergency appeals. Another study found that the U.N. World Food Program took 196 days to respond to relief requests. But Hancock treats disaster relief as the tip of the iceberg.

For Hancock, the problems of the world's disaster relief agencies are explained by their position within a fatally flawed foreign aid system. That system—dominated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the U.N. and private relief groups—promotes economic programs that often destabilize rather than develop poor nations.

Since the early '80s, poor southern countries have been repaying more in old loans to the wealthy north than they have received in fresh aid. "Between 1982 and 1987, British banks took in more than 80 billion pounds in debt-service payments from Latin America," Hancock notes. "Averaged out, this meant that every man, woman and child in that impoverished continent had transferred a generous 40 pounds a year to the City of London. By contrast, Britain's bilateral aid to Latin America during the same period was worth just under eight pence per capita per annum."

And the donor countries do their best to spend their foreign aid at home. "Even today [1989], 70 cents out of every dollar of American 'assistance to the Third World' never actually leaves the United States," Hancock writes. "The

Agency for International Development spends an awe-inspiring \$7 billion a year purchasing goods and services directly from domestic companies and contractors."

With the First World reaping most of the benefits from foreign aid, Hancock argues that a complete cut-off of assistance would improve the plight of the world's poor. After all, he says, before the rise of the World Bank and the IMF "all countries got by perfectly well without any aid at all."

Hancock is right that the world would be better off if development agencies stopped squandering vast resources on destructive projects. But he overlooks the fact that today many countries—faced with burgeoning populations—cannot meet the basic needs of their people without some form of foreign aid.

Instead of embracing Hancock's abolitionist scheme, we must envision an alternative form of foreign aid. In a blistering history of the World Bank, *Mortgaging the Earth*, Bruce Rich joins Hancock in attacking the destructive impact of most foreign aid projects. But he looks hopefully at development groups that focus "on providing technical assistance and transferring small grants and loans (typically less than \$50,000) to local communities, small businesses, farmers, entrepreneurs, non-governmental groups and cooperatives in the developing world." Such programs will mean little to financial ministers and international corporations, but they could promote new patterns of sustainable development; thus stabilizing communities now prone to famine, war and disease.

Not so long ago Rwanda was known as the Switzerland of Africa, the land of a thousand hills whose 8 million people terraced the country's slopes, carving out small farms to grow sorghum, beans and vegetables. "Rwanda has neither large estates nor the rural proletariat that goes with them," wrote Charles Jeanneret in a recent edition of *The Unesco Courier*. "Politically, the nation is enviably stable," Jeanneret added. Families lived comfortably in a cashless economy with an average income of \$260 a year. The World Bank had done some damage with timber and agricultural projects, but nothing on the scale of the giant dams, mines and power plants unleashed on countries with more valuable natural resources.

In Rwanda one of the biggest industries was catering to the tourists who came to see the "Gorillas in the Mist" made famous by Dian Fossey, who worked in the Parc des Volcans, which spreads across the border of Rwanda and Zaire northeast of Goma. In 1990, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front invaded this region, the American press seemed to worry more about the safety of the mountain gorillas than the hundreds of thousands of refugees. Now, of course, the media is covering "Hell on Earth." Only in our arrogance did we fail to see the Rwandan people until now, as they fulfill our stereotype of a dark continent ravaged by famine and slaughter.

Will Nixon is an editor at *E* magazine and a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

I N T H E A R T S

“Don’t nobody forget it”

A new documentary looks at the personal side of the civil rights movement.

By Pat Dowell

T

here is much in *Freedom on My Mind* that will be familiar to any student of the civil rights era. But this movie—a commemoration of an extraordinary summer in the movement—offers more than a recollection of events. It testifies to the power of fighting against injustice, even when you suffer losses.

The almost two-hour documentary, funded largely by the National Endowment for the Humanities, retells the history of the voting rights drive that culminated in the Freedom Summer of 1964, an uneasy season that brought young white volunteers to hostile Mississippi to register black citizens.

The virulent racism, the threats and attacks against blacks as well as white civil rights workers, the rise of the movement—these are historical facts that other filmmakers have examined

before. *Freedom on My Mind* tackles them in a familiar documentary form, juxtaposing present-day interviews of Freedom Summer veterans with civil rights-era news footage, still photographs and even home movies. The style is straightforward, more compelling for what the filmmakers choose to present than for how they present it.

What distinguishes *Freedom on My Mind* is its emphasis on the personal dimension of history. It’s not just that co-directors Connie Field (of *Rosie the Riveter* fame) and Marilyn Mulford use a few individuals as prisms on the conflict. The filmmakers are just as interested in how people were transformed by the movement as they are in the historical record.

No one in the film illustrates this conjunction of politics and the personal so spectacularly as Endesha Ida Mae Holland, who recounts that she was an uneducated girl of 11 when she was raped by her white employer. She eventually became a prostitute, and when the Northern volunteers began to stream into her town, she followed them around hoping to turn a trick. Instead, they

saw in her a potential organizer; and she became active in the voting rights movement. Among other things, she brought to the cause an intimate knowledge of arrest procedures—which came in handy for the protesting sons and daughters of middle- and upper-class families, who had never seen the inside of a jail.

When Freedom Summer participants update their lives at the end of the film, we learn just how much this bubbling, jovial and perceptive woman was transformed. “I’m Dr. Endesha Ida Mae Holland,” the professor and playwright says to the camera, “and don’t nobody forget it.”

It’s an exhilarating moment, but I couldn’t help wondering what’s become of those on the other side as well; too bad that Field and Mulford didn’t track down at least one of the historic summer’s many white racists for an interview.

Freedom on My Mind does, however, provide insights into the peculiar manners of Southern white supremacy. As the white civil rights workers recount, they were embarrassed by the deference of older blacks; the black participants recall how unused they were to calling any white person by their first name without preceding it with “Miss” or “Mister.” All of them recall that racist opponents of the movement were preoccupied with the possibility of interracial sex. In newsreel footage, one white man makes it perfectly clear when he angrily proclaims of blacks: “They don’t want somethin’ like what you got. They want *what* you got: your women!”

How many Americans, I wonder, have forgotten that this was the way it was only 30 years ago? And how many not so secretly yearn to turn the clock back? This year in Widowee, Ala., high school principal Hulond Humphries tried



Freedom on My Mind
Directed by Connie Field
and Marilyn Mulford

to cancel the prom because interracial couples planned to attend. He wasn't fired for nearly six months—after the school had been destroyed in an arson fire and the U.S. Justice Department had filed a court motion for his removal. A recent Associated Press poll shows that 29 percent of Southern whites believe that the nation has done too much to help blacks, while only 24 percent believe it has done too little. Nationally, only 30 percent of white Americans—compared to 57 percent of African-Americans—think the nation has done too little for blacks.

As sociologist Melvin Oliver told the *Los Angeles Times*: "Blacks and whites are more politically estranged from each other than they have been in the last 20 to 30 years—since the era of the civil rights movement."

Freedom on My Mind juggles the setbacks and victories of that movement, without slighting either. We learn of the white Mississippi couple, the Heffners, who hosted discussion groups in their house and were immediately and totally ostracized by their lifelong friends. Red Heffner lost his business, and they had to leave the state; Malva Heffner still tears up just talking about it.

For a white volunteer like Marshall Ganz, "the experience of arbitrary power being exercised over me" was an eye-opener that changed the direction of his life. He returned to Bakersfield, Calif., and joined the farmworkers movement.

And on the historical side, the film contributes a detailed and intimate picture of the movement's defeat at the Democratic National Convention in 1964 at Atlantic City. After Dixiecrats kept blacks out of their state delegation, civil rights advocates organized a new entity, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The Freedom Party then slated an alternate convention delegation and challenged the credentials of the regular Democrats from Mississippi.

They faced a powerful opponent in Lyndon Johnson, who feared he would lose the whole South in the upcoming election if the blacks were seated. The film details how Hubert Humphrey, Mr. Liberal himself, was LBJ's hatchet man. Famed labor lawyer Joe Rauh, representing the challengers, recounts how the president used Humphrey, Rauh's "closest political associate," and the United Auto Workers' Walter Reuther, "my biggest client," as intermediaries in an attempt to dissuade the delegation from upsetting the political applecart. Even more chilling is the story told to one activist by a black California delegate, who said she had been assured that her husband could forget about a judgeship he was in line for if she voted to seat the Freedom Party.

LBJ even called a press conference to divert the networks from covering Freedom Party member Fannie Lou Hamer's stirring speech to the credentials committee; foiling his plan, they rebroadcast it later that night. The challengers thought they had won up until the very moment when they were sandbagged with a puny compromise of two delegates, which the Freedom Party rejected.

The victory was LBJ's, but as Robert Moses, a serene and perceptive force in the movement, suggests at the film's close, the country paid a price. He asserts that in this defeat lay the alienation of a generation of blacks who took to the streets because there was no avenue for redress and reform within the electoral system.

At a time when many people think the civil rights movement has been victorious and its work is finished, *Freedom on My Mind* recalls that not every struggle ended in measurable triumph. It also shows that the struggle has been long, hard-fought and dangerous—and that it not only changed laws, but perhaps most lastingly, minds. It has many yet to transform. ◀

Freedom on My Mind is being distributed by Tara Releasing (800-995-6068); it has so far played New York and Washington, where its premieres have become the occasion for a reunion of sorts. It will come to 80 other cities in the next few months.

I N P R I N T

Messiah for hire

By Ilan Stavans

Mario Vargas Llosa was once an avid reader of Marx, Engels and Lenin. In 1953, at the age of 17, he was recruited to be a member of Peru's Communist Party (his pseudonym was "Comrade Alberto") and he campaigned actively against the Odría dictatorship. But his left-wing past seems to be buried, unrecognized. Today the Peruvian novelist is known as one of Latin America's most ardent supporters of post-industrial, free-market capitalism. After World War II, he helped to define the ideological territory of the left; now, perched atop a magisterial throne, he accuses it of stupidity and shortsightedness.

A Fish in the Water, Vargas Llosa's new memoir (now available in Helen Lane's capable English translation), illuminates what Lionel Trilling aptly called "the bloody crossroads" of art and politics, tracing Vargas Llosa's journey from rebel to conformist, which culminated in his failed campaign for the presidency of Peru in 1990. His political odyssey is certainly fascinating and needs to be fully understood to make sense of the ups and downs of the Latin American left throughout the 20th century.

Born in the southern state of Arequipa, Vargas Llosa was sent at the age of 14 to the Leoncio Prado Military Academy in Lima, a rigid boarding school where the future writer learned lessons in rigid machismo and xenophobia. He nurtured dreams of one day becoming a poet, but his father, afraid that literature would make him a "queer alcoholic," hoped instead to turn him into a "real man." The experience only accentuated the writer's rebellious spirit.

A middle-class child, Vargas Llosa was shocked by the poverty and injustice he encountered in the Peru he inhabited. He was sensitive to inequality and sympathized with Jean-Paul Sartre's call for intellectuals to embrace political

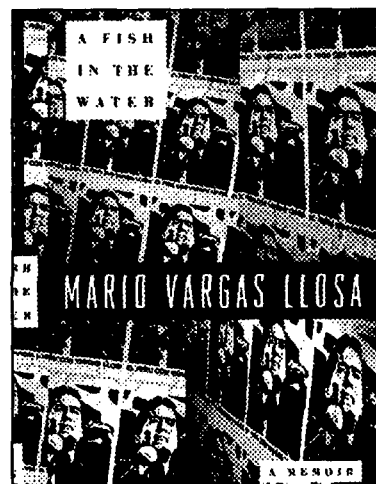
commitment. Soon after his graduation from the academy he found himself fighting, like many Latin American adolescents, then and today, for a more democratic and egalitarian society.

Initially embracing the Cuban revolution as a Second Coming, Vargas Llosa grew disenchanted after Fidel Castro began demanding a type of support from writers and painters that required a suspension of freedom. He moved toward a center-right ideological position, writing a series of calculated attacks against the Latin American left. Vargas Llosa's essays, translated into English by conservative friends and published in *Commentary* and other journals, described the Hispanic psyche with accuracy, and showed the distorting consequences of the importation of radical ideology from abroad. His criticism, though mean-spirited, was often invigorating, especially to a younger generation frustrated with the dogmatism of the older left. But Vargas Llosa went too far—portraying socialism south of the border as a negligible force, incapable of assuming full governmental responsibility.

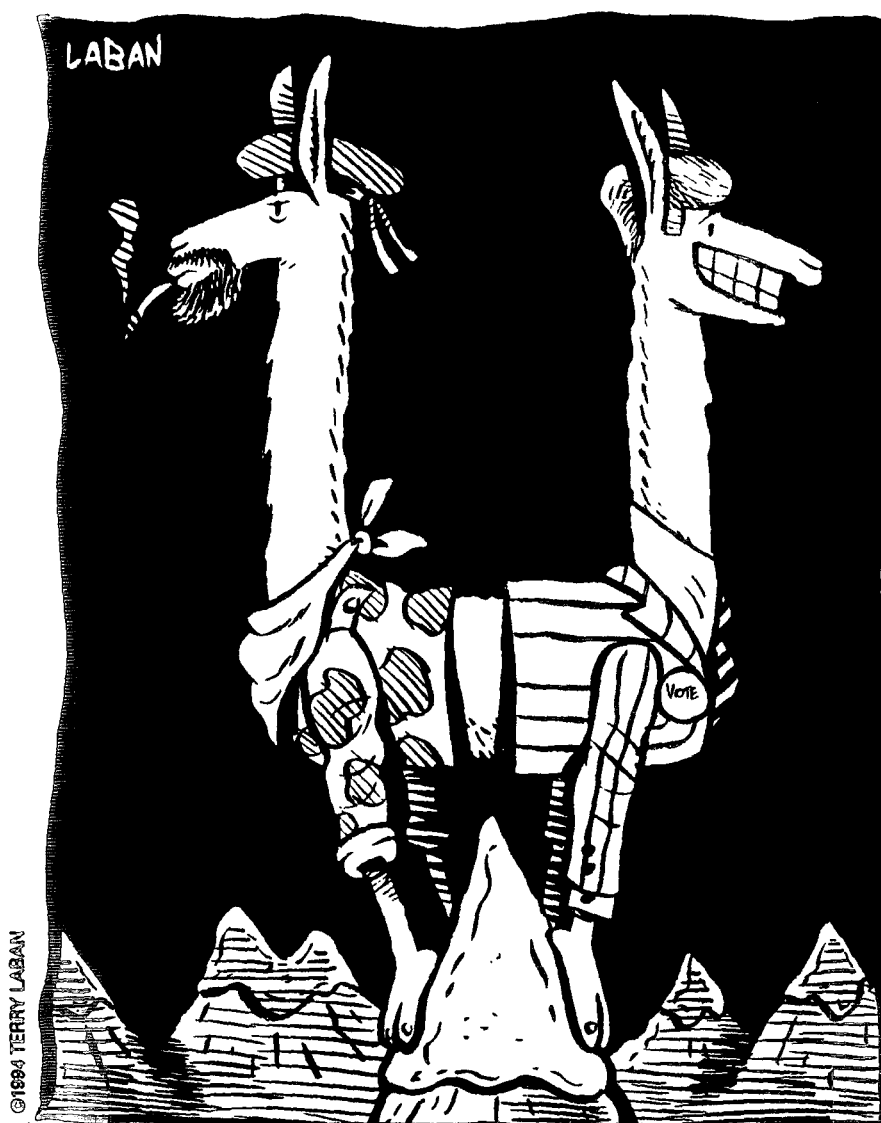
In the wake of his ill-fated presidential campaign, Vargas Llosa has been largely discredited in the eyes of the region's intelligentsia, having proved incapable of translating his ideas into practice. He's now seen as a traitor. Once again, what's fascinating is the way in which Vargas Llosa has played out his ideological transformation in public. His disenchantment with Castro, his embarrassing political campaign, his attempts to manipulate Peru's public opinion—all were maneuvers he performed in front of a ubiquitous camera. He is a master of the limelight, a genius in the uses of media manipulation. The problem, of course, is that his strategy backfired.

Vargas Llosa officially entered politics on July 28, 1987, after listening to radio news about the nationalization of the banking industry by then-Peruvian President Alan García. As he put it, he felt compelled to defend his nation's dignity, to fight for freedom and free enterprise. Inadvertently, he also became an ideologue, the kind of person he had always despised. As a good Latin American politico, he quickly mastered the art of talking nonsense.

From the start, his commitment to the political arena was marked by an obvious



A Fish in the Water: A Memoir
By Mario Vargas Llosa
Translated by Helen Lane
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
532 pp., \$25.00



ambivalence, and it was precisely that ambivalence, which he found impossible to hide, that ensured that his journey would be a colossal misadventure. He didn't want to enter politics, because to him politics implied dirty maneuvers, ugly plots, intrigue and betrayal. And his feelings for his country were similarly divided. His writings have always demonstrated what one critic has called "polluted patriotism": while he wrote about Peruvian poverty and corruption, he lived pleasurably and untroubled at a distant European address.

Yet once he decided to run for public office, Vargas Llosa immediately saw himself as his country's messiah, the ultimate redeemer who would finally eliminate inflation, corruption, poverty and ethnic strife—ancient, larger-than-life maladies that have affected Peru since the conquistador Pizarro first set foot there in the 16th century. At one point, as the campaign was coming to an end, his opponent, Alberto Fujimori, stated: "It seems that you would like to make Peru a Switzerland, Doctor." And indeed, Vargas Llosa seemed ready to use his magic stick to turn his Third World

country into an invigorated competitor in the First—a quixotic enterprise, worthy of one of his epic novels.

His political misadventure, to be sure, isn't unique. From Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, a 19th-century Argentinian writer and political pariah who eventually became his country's elected president, to Ernesto Cardenal, the poet who served as Nicaragua's interior minister during the Sandinista regime, the region's intelligentsia have attempted to straddle politics and art, seeing themselves as enlightened guerrillas.

Vargas Llosa made his literary debut in his mid-20s, when he published *The Time of the Hero*, a first-rate tale about his experience in the military academy. His early novels are generally considered masterpieces. But his recent work has been unfocused and inconsistent. In *A Fish in the Water* Vargas Llosa creates two parallel narratives—one about his almost three-year-long presidential campaign; the other about his coming of age in Lima from his birth in 1936 to 1958, when, at the age of 22, he left for Paris to become a professional writer. Vargas Llosa, evidencing little humility, writes bitterly about his antagonists. But the narrative about the campaign suffers from an abundance of insider's information that readers outside Peru will surely find boring and obstructive. At times, *A Fish in the Water* reads like another version of the Passion story: Jesus Christ coming to save the unfortunate. What the volume leaves out, what the reader has to

guess, is Vargas Llosa's middle life, from the moment he reached Europe until the late '80s. Clearly that wasn't a territory he set out to explore, but one finishes his memoir with a sense of incompleteness, a feeling of getting only a small part of the whole story.

In spite of the heavy financial support from outside investors, Vargas Llosa's closeness to Peru's oligarchy and his disdain for urban and campesino low life brought him an electoral disaster he rightly deserved. In a matter of hours the frustrated novelist left the country for a self-imposed exile. Having renounced his Peruvian citizenship (he is now Spanish), he divides his time among England, the United States and Spain. In the four years since his defeat, he has returned to Peru only once, to attend the marriage of his daughter. Don't ask what you can do for your country; ask what your country can do for you. ◀

Ilan Stavans, a Mexican novelist and critic, teaches at Amherst College. He is the author of *The Hispanic Condition* (Harper-Collins), among other books, and is currently editing *The Oxford Book of Latin American Essays*.

Survey says

By Genevieve Futrelle

While the authority of statistical data seems to have established itself in our everyday lives, persuading us to buy certain toothpastes or to eat muffins made of particular ingredients, many of us would like to believe that we've remained skeptical of numbers, raising a quizzical eyebrow each time the evening news presents us with the results of a new study. Despite the earnest scientific pretension with which such studies are presented, many are easy enough to dismiss. A 1991 Roper study reported that 3.7 million Americans may have been abducted by UFOs. A 1993 report by the Southern Baptist Convention calculated that 46.1 percent of people in Alabama risk going to hell. And, according to one dental newsletter, eating chocolate might actually inhibit cavities. The newsletter, it turned out, had been financed by M&M/Mars.

Still, the studies get our attention—and, because so many people have so little experience understanding modern research and its methods, it's not always easy to tell when the results are dubious. As *Wall Street Journal* reporter Cynthia Crossen suggests in *Tainted Truth*, "we respect numbers, and we cannot help believing them." It's not simply a question of gullibility. Much of the information we receive has already been carefully interpreted for us by those with a financial interest in what we believe—and has been packaged as artfully as any new product.

In her book, Crossen leads us through medical research facilities, political poll-taking services, university laboratories, television stations and courtrooms, exposing the ways in which researcher biases help to obscure the truth about our health, our environment and our collective opinions. Research, Crossen believes, has become dreadfully commercialized. With private companies funding much academic research, findings contradicting the safety and effectiveness of a new product are habitually suppressed.

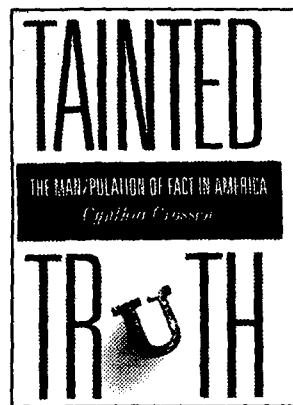
Crossen's own investigation is thorough, and she is able to present the complexity of the problem while still making it accessible to her audience. In one of her more interesting chapters, she traces in detail the contours of the Great Oat Bran Debate, which began in the mid-'80s with a report suggesting that oat bran had an effect on cholesterol levels, and trailed on through the '90s thanks to the Quaker Oats

Co. Refusing to let go of initial findings that suggested that oat bran lowered cholesterol—information later dismissed by a number of studies as insignificant—the company continued to publish its own studies reasserting this belief.

Similarly, though more insidiously, silicone breast implants were believed to be safe, long after evidence to the contrary came to light, in large part because Dow Corning Wright, a company with hundreds of millions of dollars in annual implant business, conducted a massive public relations campaign designed to quell public concern. The company claimed to have conducted hundreds of scientific studies proving the safety of the implants, but, as Crossen reports, the company based many of its safety claims on the results of just one study, a two-year project involving four dogs. "According to a published article about the study by two Dow Corning scientists, the dogs had remained in normal health," Crossen writes. "In fact, as later emerged, one dog had died and the other had developed a large tumor."

Unfortunately, Crossen's solutions fall short of the enormity of the problem she describes. She paints a discouraging picture of those who are attempting to regulate our information mess, describing the few watchdog groups that do exist as "largely toothless." And her suggestions as to how those involved in research can disentangle themselves from the corruption reads a little like a lecture on elementary moral responsibility—a collection of *shoulds*. "High schools should devote some of their mathematics curriculum to everyday statistics. ... Researchers should insist on retaining some control over the way their studies are disseminated to the public. ... They should not let themselves be turned into shells for their sponsors' products," she writes.

These guidelines seem at once obvious and unrealistic. Crossen argues passionately for us to take a stand against "the tacit acceptance of untruth in daily life," but she does not suggest why these steps are unlikely to be taken voluntarily. A few obstacles come immediately to mind: the long-term neglect of science education and our inadequate funding for academic science—not to mention big business' monopoly on consumer information. If we want to base our knowledge on information as unpolluted as possible, we must conduct science in an arena free of any economic interests. Only then, instead of science bending to the will of commerce, can science truly serve the public interest.



Tainted Truth:
The Manipulation
of Fact in America
By Cynthia Crossen
Simon & Schuster
272 pp., \$23

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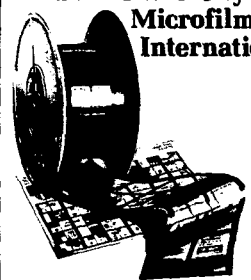
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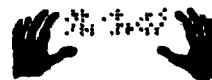
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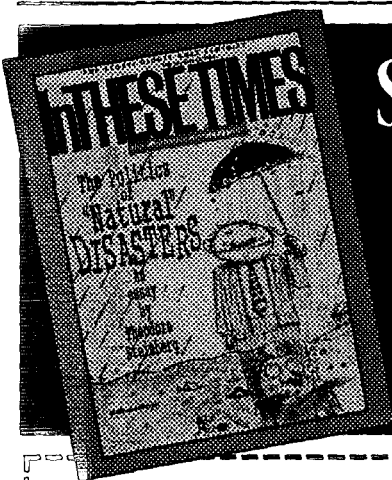
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IN THE END

By Jeff Reid

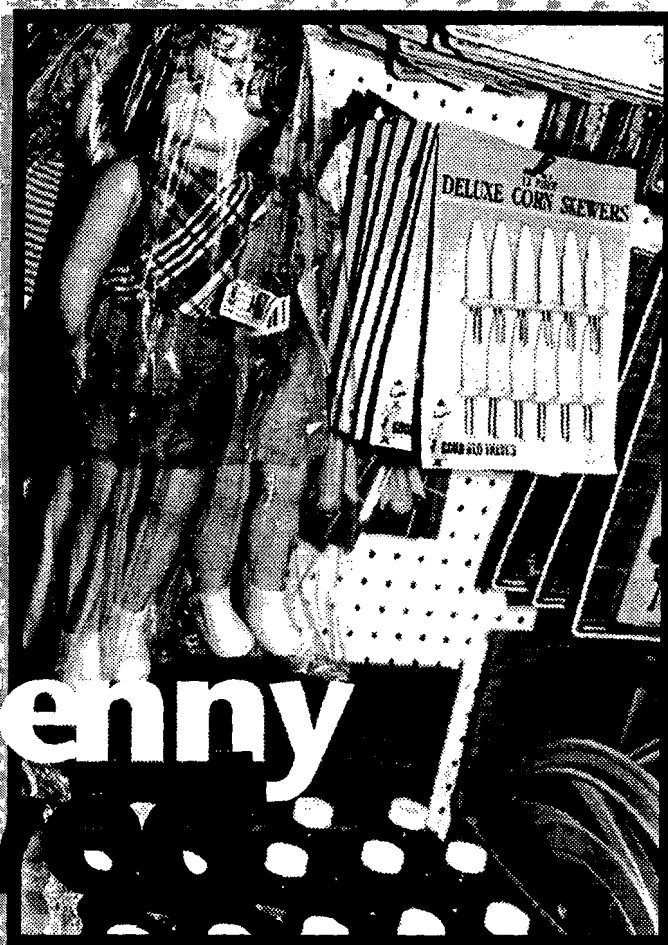
stuff that fell off the proverbial truck—for a penny less! Talk about ruthless competition. And, until recently, as part of the grand opening sale-a-bration, all items were 89 cents. As an added incentive, when you bought 12 items for 89

cents apiece you got one free. It's not surprising that this low-low introductory price didn't last. You don't need a degree in advanced mathematics to recognize a good deal, but when it comes right down to it, you might need some help finding 13 items you would actually want.

Of course, it's easy to scoff. Yet anything is better than the workaday desolation on this stretch of 14th Street, with its boarded-up stores and bogus "drug" delis that only pretend to sell legal substances. Commerce has many faces, not all of them exactly clean, and stores that sell anything legit are all to the good in these parts.

Moreover, for those who maintain that brand-name buying habits are a fraud perpetrated on American consumers by

DAVID SCHULZ



A Penny Saved

Imitation, it seems, is not only the sincerest form of flattery, but also the clearest path of commerce. Who hasn't seen a successful chicken joint hatch a rival nearby? Or a good deli quickly crowded by a shoddy clone? Fast-food franchises and video stores, too, seem to shoot up in clusters like mushrooms after a summer rain.

Witness the case of the 99-cent store in my Manhattan neighborhood on 14th Street near Third Avenue. It is a typical establishment of its type: rickety shelving stacked high with knock-offs and remnants, end-lets and whatnots. Where else—for a mere buck a pop—could you get watered-down dish soap, off-brand mouthwash, a dubious-but-functional digital watch, three working low-watt light bulbs (in a high-watt package), a mostly water-resistant umbrella, a no-frills toy squirt gun, or some possibly expired junk food? Everything you almost want is there for you, at a price you can barely resist.

But in a loopy triumph of capitalism, this neighborhood knock-off bazaar has itself been duplicated on the cheap. Just a few doors east and across the street, there is now a 98-cent store. That's right, the same shabby cornucopia of

mega-corporations and overpaid ad weasels, these bargain shops provide the ideal place to put theory into practice. Many products on the market are only marginally different, with any perceived differences being a byproduct of advertising's best-selling fictions. Who doesn't know, on some level, that Tide and Cheer and Surf are virtually identical? Nonetheless, it is a tough call in the 99-cent store (or its marginally poorer relation) when you ask yourself if you *really* want the Almost-Ajax, the Q-like-Tips, or the Sandpaper-towels. But for folks on a tight budget—i.e., just about everybody in this neighborhood—it's a question often answered in the affirmative.

Naturally, there's nothing wrong with a lovely little price war, but this one is almost microscopic. Yet, as with any war, escalation is probably inevitable. Smart shoppers may be tempted to save their pennies 'til that inevitable day when the 97-cent store opens, driving 98 and 99 to follow suit or get out of business. Of course, folks at the 99-cent store are sure to warn shoppers away from their competitors' low-quality merchandise. After all, you get what you pay for. ◀

Jeff Reid is a former *In These Times* culture editor.